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CALEB CLICKETT

THE GREAT DETECTIVE

BY

ALLEN GRAVES

(OF THE SECRET SERVICE).



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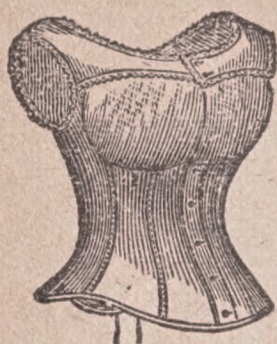


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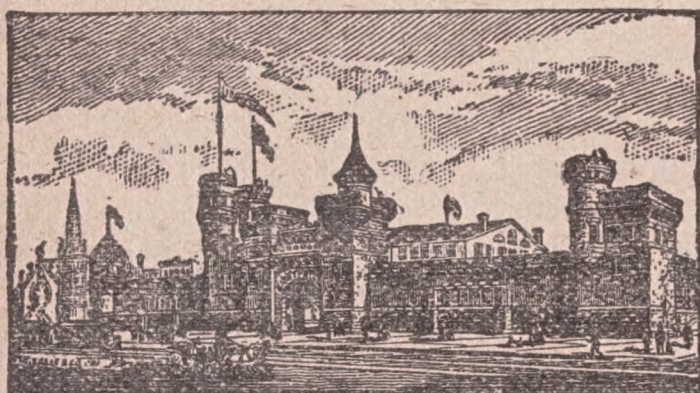
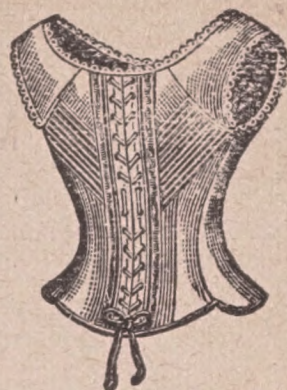
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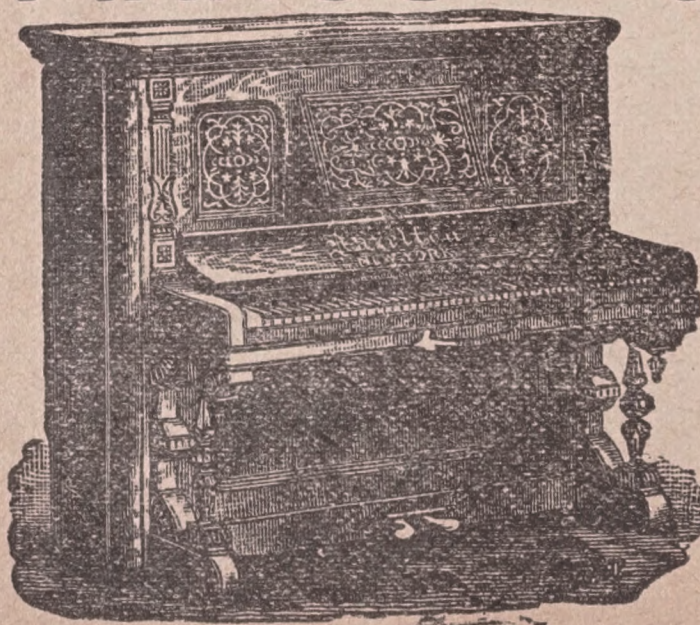
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WITH A GASP AND A GROAN BRIAN HAWKES FELL HEAVILY
TO THE GROUND.—Caleb Clickett, p. 103.

CALEB CLICKETT
THE GREAT DETECTIVE
OR
TRACKED BY A FINGER-NAIL

BY
✓
ALLEN GRAVES

Chief of the Detective Bureau, Author of "Barry Bayne,"
"The Cavern of Death," etc.

40
Pinkerton

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CALEB CLICKETT

THE GREAT DETECTIVE

CHAPTER I

DETECTIVE HACKETT—A CONSUMMATE "PENMAN"—
THE ARREST

The superintendent of the Chicago police was seated at his desk in his private office, hastily running over a file of papers in his hands. A well-dressed, prosperous-looking gentleman had just left him, and he was quite alone in the room.

Presently, with an impatient movement, he threw down the file, and, after sweeping a number of other papers into a drawer, touched a call-bell.

The door opened, an attendant entered, and waited deferentially to be addressed.

"Ah! Gourley, has Hackett come in yet?" asked the superintendent.

"I don't think he has, sir," was the answer.

"What can be keeping him?" muttered the

official; "I sent for him more than half an hour ago."

"I haven't seen him much about headquarters lately, sir," the attendant ventured to remark; "I think he must be working up some important case."

"Of course he's working up an important case," returned the head of the department. "I know all about that, and it's the important case I want to see him about. He ought to report to his superior once in twenty-four hours, at least."

"Certainly, sir."

This reply seemed to irritate the superintendent somewhat, as though it reminded him that he had lowered his dignity, in a measure, by saying even as little as he had to a mere doorkeeper and attendant.

"You may go," he said, "and when Hackett shows himself, send him in to me immediately."

"Yes, sir;" and Gourley discreetly and noiselessly retired.

Less than ten minutes later, there was a knock at the door, and in answer to his short, sharp "Come!" a tall, spare-built, clean-shaven man, dressed in a modest suit of gray, presented himself.

"Ah! Hackett," exclaimed the superintendent, in a tone of relief, "you are here at last, then?"

"Yes, sir. You sent for me?"

"Yes; it's about that forgery case—the Penny affair. You have made no report, and the Northwestern Lumber Company is getting impatient. Indeed, the president, Mr. Jerome, has but just left me."

"It's the own criminal carelessness that's caused all the delay," replied Detective Hackett, emphatically. "If you remember, sir, when Mr. Jerome first reported the case here, and you sent for me, the first question I asked him was where his bookkeeper, the alleged forger, lived. To your astonishment, as well as mine, he did not know."

The superintendent nodded acquiescence.

"I remember," he said.

"Well, sir," the detective went on, warmly, "I very soon learned that there wasn't an officer nor a man connected with the Northwestern Lumber Company who knew anything about the residence of the suspected party. There was a serious hitch, to begin with."

"I should say so! But the man—a clergyman, I think he was—who recommended Penny to the lumber company, did you see him? He ought to know where the fellow lived."

"You refer to the Rev. Samuel Pyetie, the zealous head of the Hallelujah Mission. Yes, I saw him, and that, too, without unnecessary loss of time, you may be sure. He knew no more

about where Penny could be found than the others; and so I had to go to work and ferret the fellow out for myself."

"Ah! you have found out his hiding-place, then?"

"Certainly," was the matter-of-fact reply.

"Well, tell me all about it;" and pointing to a chair, the superintendent intimated that Hackett should be seated.

The detective drew the chair a little nearer the desk, and, when he had fixed himself comfortably, began:

"In the first place, I learned from the credulous Mr. Pyetie that Penny had dropped into his mission one cold night in December last, looking seedy and considerably broken up from the effects of dissipation. He seemed deeply interested, manifested the greatest penitence for his sins, and appeared so much in earnest that Mr. Pyetie was quickly drawn toward him."

The superintendent nodded, as much as to say, "I understand."

"He said," the detective went on, "that he was from the East; that, some three or four months before, he had come into possession of a large sum of money—quite a fortune, in fact—and thinking that he could do better by investing it in the West, he had come to Chicago. But, he said, he was a little unsophisticated, and easily in-

fluenced; that, unfortunately, he had fallen in with bad men and women, who had led him into all sorts of reckless dissipation. This he had kept up for more than three months, until, in fact, all his money was gone, when his fair-weather friends had promptly deserted him, and left him to starve, for anything they cared. The good but simple-hearted clergyman at once set himself to work to do something for the penitent spendthrift; and the fellow played his cards with the most consummate skill, for he not only obtained a good situation through the efforts of the missionary, but also persuaded Mrs. Rachel Rockwell, a good-looking, buxom widow, and a great friend of the mission, to marry him."

"Ah! ha!" exclaimed the superintendent, quickly; "that last is worth making a note of, Hackett."

"I have made a very careful note of it, sir," was the quiet reply, "and I am already satisfied that it will amount to something."

"Good! go on."

"In January, Penny entered the employ of the Northwestern Lumber Company, at their office in this city, and soon proved himself to be a most excellent accountant. For several months he gave great satisfaction, but little by little he renewed his dissipated habits, until he fre-

quently appeared at his desk in a state of intoxication. This led to his discharge. And let me say right here, sir, that the fellow was such a consummate scoundrel, such a finished villain, and such a perfect penman, that if it hadn't been for this one weakness—this overmastering love for strong drink—he might have gone on for months, and even years, without ever being found out, and the lumber company might, and probably would, have been ruined. Why, sir, his skill with the pen is marvelous—simply marvelous; his imitations of his employer's signature were so absolutely perfect, that, as you know, the latter believed them to be genuine; he couldn't doubt them.'

"Yes," assented the superintendent; "I am fully satisfied that the fellow must be considered an expert in his line."

"He's all of that, and more too," said the detective, warmly. "And it's mighty fortunate that his career as a forger has been cut short by what we may, after all, venture to call a timely discovery."

"I agree with you, Hackett. You have been to the banks, I suppose?"

"Yes; but in order that you may understand the whole business, let me go back a little. You will remember that Penny was discharged on the 13th. Well, on the 25th, the Third National

Bank returned the lumber company's bank-book, which had been balanced, and also their canceled checks. On looking over the latter, Mr. Charles B. Jerome, the president of the company, as you are aware, discovered one dated on the 2d instant, drawn in favor of Penny for fifty-five dollars, as 'petty cash.' Though the president had no recollection of giving his accountant such a check, the signature was so like his own—in short, the imitation was so perfect—that he believed his memory must have failed him. The check was numbered 923, and the same number appeared on another check of the same date.

"Then it was," continued the detective, after a momentary pause, "that Mr. Jerome came and consulted with you, and you sent for me, knowing that I had had a good deal of experience in this sort of thing.

"Well, I soon discovered five other checks, all drawn in favor of Penny. One was dated on the 3d, No. 962, for \$75; another bore date of the 11th, No. 974, for a similar amount; the third was dated the 17th, No. 982, for \$165; and there were two others for \$125 each. As the numbers were duplicated, it was then evident that Mr. Jerome's signature had been forged.

"The next thing I did was to go to the Commercial National Bank, where the company also deposited, and there I discovered, among the ac-

cepted checks, one drawn in favor of Penny on the 17th for \$65, and another two days later, for \$80. The paying teller then remembered that when Penny presented the last check he noticed that it was not numbered, and declined to cash it unless Mr. Jerome indorsed Penny's signature. The forger went away, and after waiting a sufficient time for his supposed visit to the company's office, returned to the bank with the check bearing the indorsement 'O K—C. B. J.' This was so cleverly done that the check was promptly cashed.

"I now took one of the best men on the force to assist me, being determined to find out with the least possible delay where the nervy villain was quartered.

"If, as I have already said, Mr. Jerome had used ordinary precaution in the first place, and informed himself as to his bookkeeper's residence, much valuable time might have been saved. As it was, we at length ascertained that Penny had resided in a comfortable house on Harrison street for several weeks after marrying Mrs. Rockwell, but that he afterward went out to Lyonsville.

"Obtaining an accurate description of Penny as a man of about five feet eight and a half inches in height, well-proportioned, good-looking, and neatly dressed, and that his wife was a large,

well-formed woman, we made a thorough search in Lyonsville and the vicinity, and began watching all the incoming trains from the suburbs. Of course, we understood that the forger would avoid the direct route from Lyonsville if it so happened that he was still living anywhere in that neighborhood.

"Last evening, while out Hawthorne way with my assistant, we saw a man and woman, answering the descriptions we had received, leaving a very pretty cottage, and, after a moment's delay at the gate, start down the street. The couple walked leisurely to the next corner, and turned south.

"Now, I knew a peculiarity of my man. I knew that when suddenly spoken to he would be sure to say 'Eh?' and of this fact I determined to take advantage. On reaching the next corner they were about entering a store, when, coming up behind them, I exclaimed:

"'Hallo, Penny!'

"'Eh?' said he, as promptly as I could possibly wish; and the next moment he was a prisoner."

CHAPTER II

AN AUDACIOUS ESCAPE—A PROPHECY

"Go on, Hackett," exclaimed the superintendent eagerly, as the detective paused as if his story was completed.

"There is little more to tell," was the response.

"How did he take the arrest?"

"Coolly enough. 'What is this for?' he asked, with all the assurance in the world.

"'Forgery,' I dryly replied.

"'What! is that a crime in this free, enlightened, and progressive West?' he asked.

"'Felony, that's all,' I responded.

"The woman had by this time realized that her companion was a prisoner, accused of a dreadful crime. She uttered a moan, and fainted. I ordered my companion to summon assistance, and she was properly cared for.

"At the station-house Penny at first refused to give his name, nor would he make any answer to the charge. He acted as though being under arrest was not a new experience with him. His wife seemed utterly overwhelmed by the discov-

ery she had made, for she fainted a second time when the prisoner was marched to his cell.

"On being searched, a savings-bank book bearing his wife's former name was found on the prisoner's person. A check on the Commercial National Bank, made out to his order, for \$75, and dated July 25, was found in his vest-pocket. Like the others, it was an excellent forgery.

"It was so late when I had him fairly locked up last night, that I didn't venture to disturb you about the matter. And this morning, just as I was starting for the office to report to you, I stumbled upon a piece of evidence which detained me for some little time, and which, if I am not greatly mistaken, will result in convicting him of bigamy."

"Ah! ha! I thought there would be something like that before we were through with the business. What is the evidence, Hackett?"

"I have found that he was in the habit of sending remittances to another woman—another wife, I may safely say—in New York."

"You have done well, Hackett—remarkably well; but I am very sorry for the poor woman here, who thinks she is his wife."

"Ah, yes; and so am I."

"Where is she now?"

"Just gone to the office of the Northwestern

Lumber Company, to beg Mr. Jerome to show mercy to her husband."

"No use; he'll never do it in the world."

"No; I am satisfied on that head."

"Well, as he is anxious to see you, and will be glad to hear your report from your own lips, perhaps you had better go round to his office and have an interview with him. Of course, by this time he has heard the main facts of the arrest from the prisoner's wife."

"Yes; if she found him at his office, he knows all about it by this time. However, I'll go round at once;" and the detective turned to leave the room."

At that instant there was a hurried knock at the door, and before the superintendent could call out "Come in," the door opened, and Gourley, sticking in his head, said:

"Gamsby's here, and in a tearing hurry to see you both—more particularly Mr. Hackett."

"What in the world can he want?" muttered the detective, with a slight tinge of apprehension in his tone.

"We'll very soon know," said the superintendent. "Gourley, tell him to come in;" and a moment later, Detective Gamsby entered, looking very much excited and confused.

"What in the world is the matter, man? Come, out with it!" cried the superintendent, impatiently.

"Have the heavens fallen? or have the socialists broken out in a new spot?"

"Broken out!" repeated Gamsby, eagerly; "that's it, sir! The prisoner—Penny the Penman, the fellow we took last night—has broken out of the lock-up—clean gone; and the keeper's been found, bound and gagged, in his place."

"Ten thousand devils!" roared Hackett. "Can this be true? I—"

"Wait a moment," interrupted the superintendent; "let me understand. Is Gamsby here the man you've had with you working up this case?"

"Yes, of course."

Then, turning to Gamsby, the superintendent said:

"And you've just come from the precinct station?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the scoundrel, by some cunning trick, has really gained his liberty, and left the keeper locked up in his cell in his stead?"

"That's it exactly, sir."

"By Jove!" cried Hackett, excitedly, "I wouldn't have had this happen for a thousand dollars; no, nor for five thousand. I must know more about the matter;" and forgetting his hat in his hurry and disappointment, he rushed from the room.

"After him!" exclaimed the superintendent, pointing to the hat; "and see to it that you two leave no stone unturned to retake the criminal."

Gamsby nodded, and seizing his associate's head-piece, hurried from the room.

"This is a strange turn in the affair," mused the great head of the police department, when he had been left alone. "I wonder what the outcome will be? If the fellow makes good his escape now, I prophesy a startling career for Penny the Penman."

CHAPTER III.

A FINGER-NAIL—THE MYSTERIOUS TRAMP—A RIDICULOUS OBJECT

While the little drama just recorded was "on the boards," so to speak, in the private office of the superintendent of police of Chicago, an event of hardly less interest was taking place in the office of the head of the police department in New Haven, Connecticut.

The superintendent had just sent for the famous detective, Caleb Clickett, and was impatiently awaiting his arrival.

He had not long to wait. Clickett, with his long, thin, smoothly shaven face, keen, deep-set, piercing gray eyes, and somber black clothes, soon made his appearance.

"Ah! Caleb, I am glad you have come," said his superior; "they tell me you have been looking into this silk works affair—was the job done by a professional?"

"I think it was, sir."

"Everything cleaned out as slick as a whistle?"

"Everything, sir."

"Nothing worth carrying away left in the safe?"

"Nothing, sir."

"And they got off, leaving no trace behind?"

"*He* got off; but, fortunately, he did leave a single trace behind him."

"There was but one, then! What was the trace he left?"

Clickett took something from his upper right-hand vest-pocket, wrapped in tissue-paper, and unfolding it, placed it on the desk in front of the superintendent.

"Why, thunder! What's this?" exclaimed the great official, in astonishment—"a finger-nail?"

"Exactly," said the detective, quietly; "and I found that finger-nail on the sill of the window where the burglar made his entrance into the office of the silk works."

"You don't say so!" and the superintendent examined the object with considerable interest.

"Yes," said Clickett; "and evidently it had been torn from the robber's finger while he was scrambling in."

"It looks like it."

"There's no doubt about it, sir. And now, you see, if he's in the city, I've got him sure; he can't get away."

"But if he's left the city?"

"In that case, if he's one there's the shadow of a reason to suspect, I shall soon know the truth. I am using the telegraph and telephone

wires for all they're worth, at this very moment."

"Good!" exclaimed the superintendent in a tone of satisfaction; "you'll succeed, Clickett—I'm sure of it."

"And so am I," smiled the old detective grimly, while at the same time he picked up the finger-nail, and carefully, almost tenderly, wrapped it in the tissue-paper, and replaced it in his vest-pocket.

He was about to speak again, when he was interrupted by a knock at the door.

"Come!" called the superintendent, and the doorman ushered a rather shrewd-looking farmer into their presence.

"Well," said the head of the department, somewhat briskly, for he didn't fancy the interruption; "what can we do for you, sir?"

"My name's Holton—John Holton"—responded the countryman, "an' I live over in East Haven; work a farm there; raise stuff for market, mostly."

"That's a very interesting fact to know, Mr. Holton."

"Wait a minute, an' you'll hear something more interestin,' I reckon. I was a comin' into th' city early this mornin' with a load o' garden-truck for market, an' had got near th' p'int where Townsend avenue, Forbes avenue, an' Main street come together—that's in th' city

limits now, I reckon, since you've taken mor'n half our town from us?"

"No, it's only in the limits of the town of New Haven; but go on."

"Waal, as I was a sayin', I'd got to that 'ere p'int, an' right thar what should I stumble upon but a queer-lookin' tramp, all sprawled out in the road."

"A drunken tramp lying in the road, eh? Well?"

"Waal, I've seen drunken tramps mor'n once before, an' I reckon I should have passed right on, 'cause 'tain't a good plan t' lose much time when you're takin' garden-truck t' market in th' mornin'; but all 't onct I seed blood on th' fellow's face, an' then I stopped dead short, an' looked at him."

"Ah!" said the superintendent, with growing interest, and Detective Clickett drew a little nearer and listened attentively.

"Tramps, yer know," Farmer Holton went on, "may sleep outside at this season o' th' year, an' ginerally do; but they don't usually choose a hard, macadamized road fur their bed, or lay face down in th' mud, an' that odd position orter ha' been enough to attract my attention, I suppose, but really it was th' blood that made me stop plum' short an' whoa up my horses an' peer down curious-like at that thar still figure."

"Well, come to the point, Mr. Holton, if you please," said the superintendent impatiently.

"No, no," interposed Clickett hastily; "let him tell his story in his own way."

"Well, go on then," said the chief.

"Thank you, gentlemen," and the farmer continued: "Waal, when I seed him a lyin' there, my first thought was that he'd been drinkin' an' had had a fit; but then the uncommon stillness o' th' figure made me start an' look closer. Th' chest was' still, an' th' face where 'twa'n't bloody was blanched an' waxy. I bent lower, an' listened with all my ears. There was no breath in that body—th' tramp was dead."

."Dead!" echoed the detective, with some excitement. "What did you do when you made that discovery?"

"Waal," answered the farmer slowly, "if th' dead body had a been that of a rich man, or of one that looked as though he could have paid for it, I might have rushed round an' got help, an' sent for th' coroner an' all that. As 'twas, I told th' folks in th' nearest house, an' then came on to th' city to tell you."

"But before telling us you stopped long enough to dispose of your garden-truck, didn't you?" asked Clickett dryly.

"Waal, it so happened that I was fortunate. I disposed of all I had at one or two stalls in th'

city market. Wa'n't hindered long, yer see."

"I see."

"What is your opinion, Mr. Holton?" asked the superintendent. "Was the man murdered?"

"Looks more to me as if he'd been killed in a drunken fight," was the reply. "But, then, I don't know much about such matters."

The superintendent turned to Clickett.

"Who had I better send out there?" he asked. "If you hadn't got the silk-works case on your hands, I should want you to go."

"That's in such shape that I can leave it for a while," said the detective; "and, on the whole, I'd rather like to look into this affair."

"Very good; take hold of it, then, and I'll send out the coroner and medical examiner."

"I wish you would;" and Detective Clickett hurried away, closely followed by the farmer.

Less than half an hour later he was at the junction of Townsend and Forbes avenues and Main street, where he found the body by the side of the road, covered with a horse-blanket. A few minutes later the medical examiner arrived, and after him the coroner and grand juror.

The doctor made a careful examination and decided that the injuries to the head had probably been done by the wheel of some passing vehicle, and his theory was that the tramp had been so sleepy or so drunk that he had lain down

in the road instead of upon the grassy bank close by, and so met his death.

There were no traces of a struggle on the road or the bank, and no other marks of violence about the body; so it was removed and got into a cheap coffin as quickly as possible.

Through all these decisions and arrangements Clickett was puzzled. The body was that of a man between thirty-three and thirty-four years of age, not particularly fine-featured, but, for a tramp, remarkably clean. The face was shaven, all but the upper lip, but it did not, like most tramp faces, show a stubby growth filled with dirt.

The detective swiftly decided that the tramp was no ordinary one, and then turned to inspect his hands. They were not brown and dirty, like those of the real tramp, but white and soft as those of a lady; the nails delicate, and neatly trimmed.

The hands, indeed, did not seem to accord with the ragged sleeves at all; neither did the clothes fit the body; but that is not so uncommon, for the real tramp is not particular about an inch or two, so long as he gets the clothes for nothing.

Clickett's conclusions were that the man had not been a tramp long, and that he had belonged to a good class in society. There was

not a mark or a paper left by which the identity could be traced, and not so much as a tobacco pipe in the pockets; so, at last, the nameless tramp was duly buried, and the detective returned to his hunt for the owner of the fingernail.

Soon he had the fellow cornered where he believed it was impossible for him to give him the slip; and, willing to play with him as a cat plays with a mouse, he left others to watch him for a while, and began to make further inquiries about the mysterious and now buried tramp.

He found that a man answering to his description had begged at a good many places between the spot where the body had been discovered and Morris Cove, and that he had been alone; so the idea of a quarrel and foul play was abandoned.

In writing out a description of the body, however, Clickett was careful to give prominence to the delicate white hands, the cleanliness of the skin, and the inferences he had drawn from these facts, and thus the account appeared in the newspapers.

But no one claimed the body, or seemed particularly interested in the fate of the unknown, and so the case had every chance of being forgotten, and would have been but for a stupid boy in the vicinity of the city market who happened to run against the detective with a slimy string of fish,

and caused him to pause for a minute to scrape the mark from his clothes, instead of striding on down the street.

When he had cleaned the spot to the best of his ability, and was about to move on again, his eyes caught a strange and ridiculous object which made him pause and stand staring in wonder.

The object was a miserable tramp, a low-lived villain and general loafer, named Buck Lawless, dressed up in a fine suit of gentlemen's clothes, with hat, silk necktie, socks, and button-shoes complete.

CHAPTER IV

BUCK LAWLESS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE—ELLA SCOFIELD

Detective Clickett had never before seen Buck Lawless in anything but the sorriest of rags, and the spectacle to him was cruelly laughable.

While he stood staring, Buck chanced to look up, and caught his eye.

Then a surprising change came over him. His face paled swiftly; his eyes started forth, and he gaped at the detective, unable to advance or retire.

Clickett moved a step forward, still smiling a little at the odd figure Lawless cut, when the fellow suddenly backed round and took to his heels.

The detective followed briskly, shouting to him to stop; but although he had frequently come in contact with the authorities, he hadn't learned sense, so he ran on to the foot of Union street, where a policeman pulled him up, and throttled him nearly black in the face before he would cease struggling to get away and resume his flight. When Clickett came up, however, he suddenly changed his tactics, and became quiet and peaceful. The detective expected him to ask why he had

chased him—a question, by the way, he would have found it difficult to answer—but Lawless uttered not a sound; he simply stood there, quaking like a man in terror of his life.

Clickett was a little blown with the race, for, being nearly fifty years of age, a hard run told on him more than formerly; but he was still smiling as he said:

"Where did you get your new clothes, Lawless?"

He expected Buck to feebly respond to his smile, but, instead, he nearly dropped to the ground, and it was clear to the detective that his chance race had something in it. The crook was too lazy to run for nothing, and Clickett's only difficulty was how to hit upon the secret of his terror.

He was not an ordinary thief, nor a tramp proper, but something more than these. He was always ready for any low deviltry or for the most outrageous crime, and he was not always over-cautious in his proceedings. Still, the detective was utterly at sea in trying to guess what he could have done to make him fear his presence. His breath smelled of whisky, too, but he was quite sober—fear and the race had evidently done that. He made no answer, and seemed to regard Clickett's question in the light of a cruel joke, and to believe that, in point of fact, he knew all about it.

"You want to reserve your defense?" remarked the detective, as he handcuffed his prisoner.

Buck cast a rapid glance at his face, and uttered a sound very like a groan.

It is quite convenient at times to be a dreaded man. The prisoner, after studying his captor's features, seemed to give himself up for lost, and after that groan he gave forth no other sound; neither did he utter a syllable in reply to the detective's chaffing.

When they had got about half-way to the office, however, he dropped a small square of paste-board, which Clickett eagerly pounced upon, and found to be a pawn-ticket for a watch, upon which forty dollars had been advanced.

"Oh! so you've been pawning your watch?" the detective gleefully remarked. "It must have been an uncommonly good one, or they wouldn't have lent so much on it."

He still stared at his captor in terror, and evidently looked upon him as Satan personified. Clickett could have enjoyed his devout admiration better if he had known what it was about.

The prisoner had no chance to throw away anything else, as Clickett ordered the policeman to handcuff his free hand to his own; and in this order they reached headquarters, where, on searching him, they found in one pocket a magnificent

seal ring, too tight for his finger, and a valuable gold locket, containing a quantity of fair hair.

"Have you anything to say about these things?" asked the detective, when they had turned out his other possessions, and found him much wealthier than usual.

"I got them from my lady-love," he boldly ventured.

"Oh, indeed! And she did not take the size of your finger correctly!" Clickett cheerfully added.

"That's it exactly," he answered, looking as if he could have stabbed the officer.

"What's her name and address?" pursued his tormentor, promptly.

"I couldn't think of tellin' that," he modestly answered; "she might not quite like it, and I don't want her to know I'm in trouble."

"Did she give you this money, too?" asked Clickett, pointing to something more than \$150, which they had taken from his pockets.

He hesitated for a moment, and then said:

"Well, no; the fact is, I raised some of that on my watch."

"Oh! and did she give you the watch?"

"Yes."

"And these fine clothes?"

"Oh, no! I got them to court her in," he answered, after a moment's reflection. "She's one

of th' four hundred, yer see, so I couldn't go shabby."

The point of this joke can only be seen when we state that Lawless was one of the ugliest men in creation, and forty years old, if he was a day.

"She must be very fond of you," remarked Clickett.

Buck earnestly assured him that she just doted on him.

"Perhaps she would break her heart if she didn't see you to-night?" sympathetically pursued the detective.

The prisoner eagerly declared that she would certainly be dead before morning.

"Then she may begin breaking as soon as she pleases, for you must stay here," said the other, calmly.

He looked a world of eloquence, but allowed none of it to escape his lips, and presently was locked up charged with being in possession of articles believed to have been stolen.

Clickett then went to the pawn-broker who had issued the ticket, and was not surprised to find that the watch so disposed of was a fine gold one, worth at least \$125. It bore no name or initials, and had been pawned by a young, respectably dressed woman, who said that it belonged to her husband. The detective had no

doubt but the woman had been engaged by Lawless to do the work, but so far he was safe.

What astonished Clickett now was that no one reported the loss of such articles as those found in Buck's possession. No gentleman complained of having been robbed, or even, as it is sometimes politely put, of having "lost," the articles.

It thus became evident that the authorities had a great deal more on their hands than they could make use of; and the detective was really as much puzzled about Buck's clothes as about the jewelry, for the idea of a miserable old rascal like him wearing a fine, fashionable suit from choice was too ridiculous to be for a moment entertained.

A man who was put into the cell with Lawless learned nothing, though once he heard Buck mutter in his sleep: "You can't hang me! you can't hang me!" clearly showing that his mind was on other subjects than sweethearts.

While Clickett's time was thus taken up, a young lady had called twice at police headquarters and asked to see him, but only to find that he was absent, and on both occasions had firmly refused to state her business to anyone else.

She was quietly and richly dressed, and what startled and roused the detective was the information that she had fair hair.

A queer thought flashed across him: the hair in

the locket found in Buck's pocket was fair; could it be possible that the rogue had really told the truth, and that some infatuated girl had lost her heart to him?

The thought made the detective uneasy, and he staid at headquarters a whole forenoon in the hope of seeing the young lady, and about two o'clock was rewarded for his patience.

She was a slight little creature, but very pretty, and possessed of a singularly sweet and engaging manner; and the moment Clickett saw her he decided that it was impossible that such a low wretch as Lawless could ever have enslaved such a being.

After giving him her name as Ella Scofield, and her place of residence as near the Cove, on Townsend avenue, she stopped short in a flutter of excitement.

"It is because I have done wrong and feel that I should make atonement that I have come here," she at last breathed out, in a tearful whisper. "It will be a great sacrifice for me, but it is the only thing that will give me peace, and I don't care for myself if I only make him happy."

"It's about a lover that you've come here, then!" said the detective, with his head in a whirl.

"Yes, but I only thought I loved him, and said it because it pleased him; and then I met—met—a—" and she stopped, blushing deeply.

"You met somebody else whom you liked better?" said Clickett, to help her out of her flutter. "Well, that's common enough, and it's no sin; though it's hard on the poor fellow thrown over."

"No sin? Oh, I wish I could only think so, for I fear I have driven him mad by what I've done, and he may have committed suicide. When I told him all he seemed distracted, and said he would never look on me again. He told his friends that he was going to walk to Wallingford, but he's never been heard of since, and I've come here to see if you could not trace him out and—and give him a message;" and instead of blushing, she now paled, and the officer could see the perspiration come out slowly on her temples.

"A message? What message?"

"Just this: that I will be his wife, and give up all my own feelings and wishes to make atonement for having said I loved him when I didn't know any better. I deserve the punishment, and if that will save his life and make him happy, what need I care. A woman's happiness does not count for much with men, and whatever he thinks is right will be good enough for me."

Clickett looked at her as he quietly wiped away the crowding tears, and wondered where on earth a man could be found willing to make such a tremendous sacrifice.

He asked for her missing lover's name. She

gave it as Herbert Norton, and then he felt more satisfied than ever that she at least was not in love with the old soaker locked up in one of the cells of the station-house.

CHAPTER V

THE MYSTERY SOLVED—BUCK LAWLESS RETIRES FOR SIX MONTHS' MEDITATION

Herbert Norton was the son of a celebrated physician residing on Whitney avenue, and had started off, almost immediately after his rupture with Miss Scofield, to walk to a friend's in Wallingford; but he had never reached his friend's house in that town, or been heard of since he set out, and the young lady's fear was that he had simply gone down to South End or Morris Cove, and ended his troubles beneath the water.

She thought, that if the cove and the little gulf just within the breakwater were dragged and thoroughly searched, she would feel easier; or if the detectives could trace Norton in the ordinary way, through the country.

Give him her message! that was all that was needed to recall him to life and joy; all that she prayed them to do; and if they accomplished that, they should have her eternal blessings.

Then came the description of his appearance, and his clothing and possessions when he started on his sudden journey; and with that, Clickett's

uneasiness returned, for every article tallied exactly with the strange possessions of Buck Lawless, when he showed such a desperate desire to get far away from the old detective—a gentleman's fine suit, extra nice button-shoes, silk necktie, a gold watch, a locket containing fair hair, a magnificent seal ring, and a well-filled pocket-book.

The circumstance was so strange that Clickett turned, and brought out the first of these that came to his hand—the locket—and said to her:

"Is that anything like the locket he wore?"

She took the trinket with awe and amazement, opened it hurriedly, and nearly dropped it, in her agitation.

"That is his locket," she faintly breathed. "Oh, has anything happened?"

"To him? I think not," calmly answered the detective, bringing out the watch and ring, which she identified in the same way. "I think he has merely got into bad hands, and been robbed."

Then he started and thought, for, like a flash, he remembered that dead tramp, with the clean skin and white hands, found on Townsend avenue, near the junction with Forbes avenue and Main street.

"You do know something?" she cried, noting the change in his manner. "Something has hap-

pened to him. He has killed himself, and I am the cause!"

"No, no!" cried Clickett, just to save her from hysterics. "I think I can produce a man who knows where he is," and he touched a bell and ordered Buck Lawless to be brought in from the lock-up.

The prisoner appeared in a few minutes, still wearing the fine clothes, and looking as ridiculous as a Jew peddler in a dress suit.

Miss Scofield started at the odd spectacle, and evidently recognized the clothes, for she stared at them with growing horror and apprehension.

"Do you recognize the various articles he has on?" asked the detective, quietly, of the lady.

"Yes—oh, yes!"

Lawless started and trembled frightfully, but still made no remark.

"Buck, the lady wants to know where you left the owner of that suit of clothes, and of the watch and other things found on your person when you were brought here."

"I don't know—upon my soul, I don't know, sir," he vociferously answered, with the sweat trickling down from his brow. "I—I got them at a house just outside the town, an' I disremember where th' house is."

"Was it anywhere in the neighborhood of Townsend avenue?" suddenly inquired the detective;

and if he had fired a cannon close to his ear, the effect could not have been more magical. Lawless dropped as suddenly as though he had been knocked down.

"Booked for the gallows," said the detective to himself, as they picked the prisoner up, and gave him a drink of water. But when he had recovered, he still persisted that he knew nothing whatever of the whereabouts of the owner of the clothes.

In mercy to Miss Scofield, Clickett said nothing of his suspicions, but dismissed her with the assurance that he would do all in his power for her help and comfort.

As Lawless was being led off again, the old detective said to him:

"I think I know your secret, my fine fellow, and you'll be hanged, as sure as fate."

He uttered a wild and groveling protest of innocence, and was dragged off, nearly taking the lapel of Clickett's coat with him, for he loudly appealed to that distinguished official to save him, as he knew, he said, that he had no murder in him.

The indefatigable detective now hastened out to Dr. Norton's residence, on Whitney avenue, and that same evening he and the doctor were driven out to the little country church-yard in East Haven, where the dead tramp had been buried.

As soon as the coffin had been exhumed and opened, the mystery was solved, for the doctor instantly identified the body as that of his son, Herbert Norton. At the same time he expressed a decided opinion that his son had been murdered by Lawless for the sake of his possessions, the murderer then changing clothes with his victim to avoid discovery.

Clickett was inclined, from Lawless' conduct, to agree with this opinion, though it was against that of the police surgeon who had examined the body; so, on their return to the city, Lawless was had up before the judge of the City Court, and formally charged with the murder.

Then followed a strange scene of groveling and cowardly terror. Lawless threw himself on his knees, and declared that he had feared this very thing all along, and that if he were hanged he would die an innocent man.

"I'll tell th' truth, and th' whole truth now," he whiningly continued; "for if I'd told it before, nobody would have believed me. I came along from South End an' th' shore beyond that day, an' had a precious hard time of it, for nobody wouldn't give me nothin', an' I put off so much time that it was dark before I could get nigh a snoozin' place. Well," he continued, swallowing a gulp, "I was peggin' along, blasting everybody, when I came right on a man lying

across th' road, drunk, as I thought. I fell over him, in fact, an' barked my nose on the hard road, an' swore at him, an' gave him a kick, thinkin' he was beastly drunk. He never said nothin' nor stirred, so I stooped down an' gave him a shake. He never answered, an' he was as cold as ice, an' then I seed that he was dead. There was no blood on him, nor no hurt that I could see, so he must have suicided himself with poison, I think. When I was a touchin' him up," Lawless continued, after a moment's hesitation, "I felt his watch-chain, an' then I thought as a dead man didn't need no watches nor chains, it wouldn't be wrongin' him much to take them; so I took all he'd got. After that I thought his togs was too good to leave, so I took them off, an' not to look like robbery, I put my old rags on him instead o' them. If I was to die this blessed minute, that's th' real truth. I never put a finger on him, nor hurt him, nor knocked him down to rob him, nor nothin'. If anybody killed him before that, it wasn't me."

Not one who listened to this extraordinary story believed it, though all were obliged to admit that Buck's desperately anxious manner and eager delivery seemed to corroborate the declaration. He had no further statement to make except as to the pawning of the watch, and was accordingly locked up on the capital charge.

When Herbert Norton's father was leaving the office he said to Clickett:

"I have a good mind to let that rascal hang, but there is really a faint shadow of doubt on my mind, and for my own comfort I must have the matter investigated. One of my medical brethren—the one I usually call in consultation when there is any serious sickness in my own family—has several times, in a cautious way, directed my attention to Herbert's strangely excitable nature, and I have a suspicion that he believed the young man to be suffering from heart disease. I know that he constantly warned Herbert against running or violent exercise, or excitement of any kind; so there is just a possibility of that brutal being's story being true."

The thought accorded so perfectly with some suspicions of Clickett's own that he followed it up at once by going with Dr. Norton directly to the residence of the other physician, which was at no great distance, and he promptly declared that in his opinion Herbert Norton had been afflicted with heart disease from his infancy, and been liable to die at any moment.

The post-mortem examination fully confirmed this statement, and proved beyond all doubt that heart disease, and that alone, had caused young Norton's death. Lawless, therefore, was arraigned in the Court of Common Pleas, not for

murder, but robbery, and appeared profoundly thankful when he got off with six months' imprisonment.

Ella Scofield for some time believed that she, and she alone, was the cause of her lover's death; but a conversation with the doctor, who had foreseen his fate and whom she happened to meet at the residence of her friends and neighbors, the Mannings, disabused her mind of this error, and in time she could think of the past with calmness and the future with hope.

CHAPTER VI

AT THE GATEWAY OF THE QUINNIPIAC ENGINE AND BOILER WORKS—HAWKES AND EMBLER IN THE RIVER

The great Quinnipiac Engine and Boiler Works are perhaps as well and favorably known as any establishment of the kind in this country. The works are situated on the Quinnipiac River, above Forbes avenue and Tomlinson Bridge, and just west of Wheller street. The buildings front to the street, and run back toward a private dock which extends well out into the river and nearly to the channel.

This dock, which is used exclusively by the works for landing iron and other materials, and for shipping the finished engines and boilers to all parts of the world, is shut in from all intruders—excepting such as may come by water—by a high wall and a great gate through which all the workmen pass in going to and returning from the scene of their daily toil.

It was nearly five o'clock—the hour for "knocking off"—one evening, some months after the events recorded in the preceding chapters, when

three men connected with the works were standing conversing together in the well-littered yard, between the gateway and the dock

These men were Marshall Manning, the superintendent, a person about forty five or six years of age, and one of the best mechanics in the country; Eugene Embler, a foreman under Manning, and also a first-class mechanic; and the latter's bosom friend and almost constant companion, Oscar Sherman.

They were consulting as to some improvements to be made on an engine for a steam yacht which was being built for one of the wealthiest men in New York, and were so earnestly engaged that they took no notice of what was passing around them. Meantime two lovely young girls approached the gate from the direction of Townsend avenue, and lingered there as if waiting for some of the workmen to come out. Evidently they were sisters, and the elder might have been twenty-three years of age, while the younger was at least two years her junior.

From where they stood they could easily see the three men talking together, for they were directly in front of the gateway, though well back in the yard toward the river.

"Let me call them," exclaimed the younger impatiently; "it's near enough to five o'clock, and I don't want to stand here while all the men

are passing out;" and she took a step forward.

"No, no, Elsie!" cried her companion with a blush, at the same time seizing her sister by the arm to restrain her. "What would Oscar and—and Eugene think?"

"Pshaw! I don't care what Oscar thinks. But for that matter, I know very well he won't think anything I don't want him to. And as for Eugene, he'd give the world to have you call out to him."

"Now, Elsie!"

"Now, Mildred!"

"Ah, what luck! I'm a fortunate man to have the chance of seeing two such pretty girls at once. I wonder if there are many like you in this Yankee country?—but no, that's hardly possible; and alas for me, I suppose you two are waiting for your lovers?"

Mildred Manning, the elder of the sisters, turned upon the speaker indignantly.

"Sir!" she exclaimed, "by what right do you dare to address us? We are not—"

"There, there, Mildred!" interrupted her sister with a look of withering scorn at the stranger; "I wouldn't notice him. He isn't worthy of it."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the intruder, "I didn't think a little flattery would be amiss with such pretty girls, especially as I overheard you

talking about the fellows—the ones you'd come to meet, as I supposed."

"We came to meet our father, Mr. Marshall Manning," said Mildred sternly, "and as I see him yonder, we will go to him at once."

"Marshall Manning, the superintendent of the works—your father—the deuce you say! the very man I want to see myself. Ah! here he comes, if he's one of those three;" and just at that moment Manning, Embler, and Sherman started toward the gate.

As they drew near, Eugene and Oscar greeted the two girls warmly, and at once began talking to them, Eugene addressing his remarks more particularly to Mildred, and Oscar confining himself to Elsie.

The stranger advanced toward the superintendent; but as he did so, he caught a full view of Eugene Embler's face, and started violently.

Recovering himself, he looked again, and seemed a little puzzled, as though he was not quite sure that his first impression had been the right one.

This man who had come so suddenly upon the scene was about thirty-four years of age; he was five feet eight and a half inches in height, well-proportioned, good-looking, neatly dressed, and withal seemed to be one wholly unacquainted with adversity.

On drawing near to the superintendent, he offered his hand, saying:

"You are Mr. Manning, the manager of these works; I already know you through your charming daughters. I am Brian Hawkes, of New York, or perhaps I should say of Washington, as I spend the greater part of my time there. I heard through my friend Gould that you were building a wonderful improved engine for his new steam yacht, and being greatly interested in such matters, I have come to take a look at it."

Manning had been regarding the stranger with no great favor, and, truth to tell, there was something about the man not well calculated to inspire confidence.

"The works are just about shutting down," said the superintendent, in no very cordial tone—"there goes the whistle now—and it would be quite inconvenient to show you the engine to-night. Couldn't you call in the morning?"

A shade of disappointment and annoyance crossed the stranger's face, but he tried not to show it.

"Oh, for that matter," he said lightly, "I can call any time during the next two or three days, as I am likely to be stopping in the city. I've left my baggage at the Elliott House, and rather think I shall hang out there."

"I'm glad to hear you can put off your curios-

ity;" and, as he spoke, the superintendent drew to one side and motioned his daughters back to make room for the rushing crowd of workmen who now came crowding through the gateway.

For some moments, and until the men had passed, but little more was said; then peering into the yard and toward the dock beyond, Hawkes suddenly exclaimed:

"Is that the yacht—Gould's yacht—lying by your wharf there?"

"Yes," said Manning, dryly "it is."

"Well, you can let me take a look at her, can't you, even if I can't see her engine? I won't keep you long."

The superintendent cast a questioning look toward Embler, who in his turn was regarding the stranger with a puzzled and, withal, uneasy expression.

The young man, still keeping his eyes fixed on the new-comer's face, nodded in answer to the questioning look, and when Manning said briefly, "Come," he followed after the superintendent and the stranger, while Oscar Sherman and the two young girls remained together by the gate.

"Where have I seen that man before?" Eugene Embler asked himself a dozen times, as, keeping a little in the rear, he followed the others toward the wharf. "If I hadn't heard him say his name was Brian Hawkes, I should think

it was—was—ah! well—something else. But, pshaw! it can't be—it *can't* be that villain. And yet—"

"Embler," said the superintendent, suddenly turning toward him, "you've got the keys to the cabin and state-rooms, haven't you?"

"Not with me," was the reply. "They are in my locker upstairs, and now the works are closed."

"Embler—Eugene Embler! I thought so!" said the stranger to himself. "I am hardly ever wrong, and I never forget a face. Ah! he'd better not cross my path now; I'd crush him as I would a worm!"

Aloud he said:

"So, then, it seems I can't even examine the yacht itself to-night. I'd no idea you struck work at this hour. Seems to me the working class are getting high and mighty nowadays, and want all the privileges of the rich."

"Young man," said the superintendent sternly, "are you an American?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so."

"Then, don't you know that one man's as good as another, unless he's a villain?"

Mr. Brian Hawkes shrank a little; but quickly recovering himself, said, lightly: "Oh, I've no objection to the working-people's having a good time—in fact, all the fun they can get. If the bosses can stand it I can."

By this time they were at the edge of the wharf, near the stern of the beautiful yacht.

"If I can't go aboard, I must see all I can of her hull," he said, and leaned far out over the water to read her name and admire the carved work.

Now, whether it was because his head was so much heavier than his body, or because he had taken a glass or two of strong liquor on his way from the hotel to the river, we can't say; but one thing is certain: before he could get a good view of what he wanted to see, he lost his balance, and went plunging into the rapidly flowing current, which at this point sets strongly toward Tomlinson Bridge, and then flows out into the harbor, and from thence into Long Island Sound.

It was now late in the year; the days were short, and it was already growing dark. Those waiting at the gateway saw a moving body in the air and heard a loud splash. An instant later, they thought they heard another plunge.

'My God! there's something wrong on the dock," cried Sherman. "I must see what it is, and render assistance if I can. Stay here, dear Elsie, with Mildred."

He ran through the yard, and suddenly met Marshall Manning, who came rushing breathlessly toward him.

"Eugene Embler and Mr. Hawkes!" he gasped.

"We were at the edge of the dock, and Hawkes fell overboard. Eugene jumped in after him."

"Let me go and save him," cried Oscar. "Eugene saved me once when I was a boy. Let me try and save him now."

"It would be madness, my dear fellow—sheer madness," Manning replied. "Run and give the alarm. That is all we can do now."

Oscar turned to obey. On reaching the gate the girls stopped him.

"What is it, Oscar? oh, what is it?" asked Mildred, breathlessly.

Hurriedly he told her.

"Eugene in the swift current of the river, trying to save a drowning man! Oh, my God! he will himself perish!" and overcome with terror and grief, she would have fallen had not her sister sprung forward and caught her in her arms.

CHAPTER VII

THE "QUIET HOME"—MRS. CRANDALL DISGUSTED—
EUGENE'S AGONY

Just south of Forbes avenue, and hence at no very great distance away, was a neat little hotel called the "Quiet Home," kept by a widow, Mrs. Charity Crandall, a sister of Marshall Manning.

Mrs. Crandall was, and had always been, a very independent woman, so that when she found herself alone in the world, with nothing but the house she lived in, and that heavily mortgaged, she turned it into a family hotel, and began keeping boarders.

Years had passed since then, and now the house was twice as large as formerly, and what's more, she did not owe a dollar in the world, and she had pretty handsome deposits in at least two of the city banks.

Mrs. Crandall had a regular hotel license, and so could, and to a certain extent did, furnish her guests with wines and liquors; but she knew very well who to give them to and who to refuse.

On the evening of the accident at the dock of

the engine and boiler works, she was busy with quite a little company in a room just off the bar, when the front door opened, and Marshall Manning, his two daughters, Mildred and Elsie, Eugene Embler, Oscar Sherman, and one or two others entered, bearing between them the apparently lifeless body of Brian Hawkes.

For a time the good widow was all sympathy. A room on the first floor was quickly made ready, and there the unconscious form was carried. Then began the work of resuscitation, and after a time Hawkes opened his eyes.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, slowly raising himself to a sitting posture. "What's the matter, I'd like to know?"

"Matter enough," said the widow. "You fell overboard, and would have been drowned, an hour ago, but for Eugene Embler here. He jumped in and saved your life."

"Oh, he did, eh?" and Hawkes turned and looked at Embler with a sullen scowl.

"Ten to one he pushed me in," he muttered. "However, I won't let him know just yet that I think so," and thrusting his hand into his pocket, he drew out a ten-dollar gold-piece, and reaching it out toward Eugene, said:

"Here, fellow, take that."

"Fellow yourself!" cried Embler hotly, as he struck the money from the other's hand. "Go to

the devil, sir, and take your gold with you;" and with a darkening brow he hastily left the room.

"One thing is very evident," said Mrs. Crandall frankly. "Whoever you may be, sir, you can't be much of a gentleman, for you've no nice sense of feeling; otherwise you would not have hurt the sensibilities of such a noble young man as Eugene Embler."

"What right has a common workingman like him to feel hurt when I offer to pay him for a service he has rendered me?" asked Hawkes insolently.

"Oh, if you value your life at only ten dollars, I haven't another word to say," was the quiet reply; and then the fellow flushed a little, and shut up.

"Come," said the widow to those about her, "we'd better leave him alone now. Rest and sleep are what he wants;" and they all followed her from the room.

It was a broad sofa upon which Hawkes was reclining, and presently he fell asleep.

Hardly had he lost consciousness when the door noiselessly opened, and Mrs. Crandall softly entered, and approaching the sofa, looked thoughtfully down upon him.

"It's an evil face," she murmured to herself; "a bad face, and I wish they had never brought him here. I wish—God forgive me!—that Eugene

Embler had left him to perish in the Quin-nipiac. I believe if he had, much misery would have been spared us all. Hark! what's he saying?"

The sleeper was evidently troubled by bad dreams. His face worked convulsively, and now and again audible words dropped from his lips, such as "money," "stolen," "forgery," "good piece of work," "father," "her brother," "hunted," all of which promptly convinced Mrs. Crandall that the man had a guilty secret to hide; and being a warm-hearted, honest woman, who detested crime, her dislike for him, engendered by his insolent bearing toward Eugene Embler, was greatly increased.

Presently Hawkes awoke with a start, and hurriedly asked what she was doing there.

She gave him no hint that she had overheard anything to rouse her suspicions, but said she had come to tell him that his bed was ready, and that the sooner he was in it the better.

"Well," growled Hawkes, "I suppose you know what's good for me a blamed sight better than I know myself, and so I must submit;" and he slowly started to his feet.

"Yes," snapped the widow; "as I've taken care of quite a number of half-drowned men—and better men than you, let me tell you—I think I know what's good for them; so come along, and

don't take up any more of my time, which is valuable, I'd have you know, whatever yours may be;" and silenced, if not conquered, Brian Hawkes followed her from the room.

Meantime, on leaving the Quiet Home, Eugene Embler was brimming over with indignation, and not altogether free from jealousy, called into existence by what seemed to him Mildred Manning's obvious sympathy with Brian Hawkes, and still more by Hawkes' undisguised and insinuating advances to the girl, which, if others had not noticed, he had.

Letting the others get ahead of him after they had said good-night to Mrs. Crandall, he slowly followed them to the superintendent's cottage, well down the avenue toward the cove, changed his soaking garments for a dry suit, and although Marshall Manning pressed him to stay and have supper with them, he took leave hurriedly, and with ill-concealed agitation.

Oscar Sherman, who had looked forward to some hours spent in the company of the girl he loved, did his best to persuade his friend to remain and rest after his exertions, but Embler would not hear of it; and so, to Oscar's disappointment, within a few minutes of his arrival at the cottage, he was called upon to accompany Eugene back to the lodgings which they shared in the lower part of the city—that is to say, on

Hamilton street, between Wooster and Chapel.

The horse-cars ran to the city side of Tomlinson Bridge, and it rather surprised Oscar that, after crossing the bridge, and on reaching the terminus, where a car was standing, his companion should pay no attention to it whatever, but hasten over to the plank walk on the left-hand side of the street, and hurry forward with all speed in the direction of Collins street, as if walking for a wager.

"You're not going to walk all the way home, are you, Eugene?" he asked, wondering at the stern, set face of his friend.

"Yes; I must keep moving to-night, Oscar," answered Embler gravely, and with a slight contraction of his brows.

"Well, perhaps you are right, Eugene. You might take a chill if you sat still, as you would have to in a horse-car."

"It isn't that, Oscar, my boy. I care little whether I do or not. I must keep going to-night for other reasons, or I should go mad;" and Eugene Embler quickened his already rapid pace.

"What! is it as bad as that?" returned the younger man, understanding him with the ready sympathy of true friendship.

"As bad, or as good; I scarcely know which to say," answered Eugene huskily.

"I should say as bad, if it's going to make you

glum and unsociable," said Sherman; but he added quickly: "I can't bear to see you like this, Eugene. No woman in the world is worth the worry you are giving yourself."

His companion turned upon him rather sharply.

"I thought you were getting to be something of a man, Oscar; but I see you're only a boy as yet, and can't understand the strength of a man's passion."

"Thank goodness, I can't, if yours is a specimen of its working," retorted Oscar, whose self-esteem was just a trifle hurt. Not understand, indeed! and he ready to go to the world's end for Elsie, or make a fool of himself in any particular way she might designate.

"Well, Oscar," continued Embler kindly, taking the young man by the arm as he spoke, "don't you bother yourself about me. It's no use. I'm too far gone for anything ever to be any good again," he added bitterly.

"I can't see why you should say that, Eugene," returned Oscar quickly. "If it had been me, I could understand it."

"Nonsense! Oscar. You have a life's happiness in store for you, my boy—a happiness such as I can never know;" and Eugene Embler pressed his lips tightly together, and hurried forward with a swifter step, as if he would leave some haunting sorrow far behind him.

"But why don't you to speak to her, Eugene, and have it over with?" asked his young companion, with a little hesitation.

To his surprise, Embler turned upon him almost fiercely.

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Oscar. Why don't *you* speak to Elsie, and have it over with, if it comes to that?"

A comical look of consternation overspread poor Oscar's ruddy face, as he stammered out:

"Me? Me speak to Elsie Manning—about—on *that* subject? Why, I earn less than fifteen dollars a week on an average. What's that to go to a girl seriously with. And if she should say 'No' once—"

"Well, I don't think she would. But if she did, she would soon say 'Yes.' Trust me, Oscar, you're safe enough, my boy. I wish I could have the fiftieth part of your hope;" and he sighed heavily, and turned away.

His companion's almost boyish face flushed with pleasure; then he replied:

"Here are you, earning your twenty-five dollars and more every week, and—"

"Now look here, Oscar," said Embler quickly; "you're a first-rate fellow, and mean well, but you don't know the reason why I can't speak to— to Mildred Manning—and I can't tell you." Then, suddenly altering his tone, he added more

gently, but with an apparent effort: "Yes—I *will* tell you. I believe I can trust you."

"Yes, indeed, Eugene, you know that," interposed Oscar Sherman heartily.

"Yes, I know I can, and I *will* tell you why I can't speak to Mildred. May be it will do me good to have it out, for I have no one else I can speak to about it, and it is killing me; worse, it is driving me mad," he added, with passionate pain quivering in every accent.

His companion grew very grave as he answered:

"Tell me, Eugene—I thought there was something worrying you—tell me; perhaps I can help you."

"No, no; you can't do that—no one can help me. I am past help; but I will tell you all the same. It may at least make it not quite so hard to bear;" and, with a long, hard-drawn breath, Eugene Embler began the story of his life trouble.

CHAPTER VIII

EUGENE EMBLER'S TERRIBLE SECRET

"You say, Oscar," were the young foreman's first words, "that you have noticed that I have been very grave of late. I have had reason to be. I might be so happy but for one thing, and that one thing makes all the difference between a life that is spoiled and a life that is worth the living."

He paused, breathing hard and quickly, like a man oppressed, as in truth he was. As they hastened along the now quiet, hard-paved street which led toward their boarding-house, the very air seemed peopled with shadows from the past. They came out of that earthly hell—a ruined life.

Presently Eugene Embler resumed his self-appointed task, though with an obvious effort, and to Oscar's surprise, he began in a new way.

"Do you remember your mother, Oscar?"

The younger man started. The sudden question brought tears into his eyes. It was with a husky voice that he replied:

"Ah, yes, Eugene; I shall forget all else before I forget her."

"Then you are a great deal happier than I have ever been, my dear fellow. My mother died when I was born, and although my father was a just man, and did his duty by me according to his lights, I never knew what it was to have the soft touch, the tender care of a mother. Good God! Oscar, if children only knew what it was to be motherless, how good they would be to their mothers while they have them—those that are luckier than ever I was."

There was silence for a few moments, and Oscar Sherman pulled out his pipe and lighted it, finding his feelings too acute to be expressed.

By and by Eugene Embler resumed the thread of his thoughts where for the moment he had dropped it.

"Ah! Oscar, my boy, I sometimes think that if I had been like other boys; if I had known a childhood like others—with some brightness in it, some love—my manhood might have been very different. As it was, I just tumbled through the first half-dozen years of my life, strong and sturdy, it is true, but always covered with cuts, and bumps, and bruises, and scrambled through the next dozen picking up such knowledge as I could, but without helping hand, or kindly thought, or word of needed guidance. My father was a poor man, full of his own cares, and God forbid that I should blame him.

There were times, as I afterward knew, when he had a hard struggle to keep body and soul together, and he took such care of me as he could; but beyond finding me in food and clothing, and giving me a roof to lie under, until such time as I was to go out into the world and shift for myself, he was but little of a father to me. A pinched and poverty-stricken life makes even good men hard, Oscar, and his was hard enough, God knows."

"Was he a city man, Eugene?" asked his friend, to whom the skilled foreman had never, in all their close acquaintance, spoken so freely about himself before.

"No; Guilford—ancient, peaceful, pretty Guilford—was my native place; but even as a child I used to stand on an elevation back of our house, at sunset, and while I felt how lovely it all was, my mind would go speeding away beyond the hills that shut us in, and I grew discontented with my quiet life, and longed to take my place in one of the big cities. Poor fool!" he added, bitterly, after a slight pause. "How much like moths are we men! The glare of the lights of some great town reflected in the sky attracts us; we follow it, and plunge into the flame, only to emerge, if we escape at all, scarred and disfigured, and it may be blackened, out of all likeness of our former selves."

"And so you went to one of the big cities?" said Oscar; "which one?"

"To Boston, for a while. There was a young fellow in Guilford then—I'm speaking of the time when I was little more than sixteen—a strapping young fellow, and earning a few dollars a week in the same establishment where my father worked at making boxes and the like, who had lived all his life in Boston, and his talk fairly turned my head. Moreover, my father's work was never to my mind, and as I knew very well he would not weep over me, and as I had no friends worth speaking of to tie me to my native town, I packed up my belongings one day, and shaking hands with my father, set out to seek my fortune in Boston. It would have been well for me had I stopped there. But no; I was like a tiger that had tasted blood. Bless you, Oscar, my ideas of my own importance—though heaven knows how they sprouted so freely, for they had no encouragement from any living soul—were so high and mighty then, that even Boston itself was not really big enough for me. As I had listened in Guilford to the Boston boy, so now my imagination was set on fire by stories of New York, told by a man who was born there, and who, although he was earning a better living in Boston than he had ever had before, was always craving to go back. They say that a man

who has once been bitten by the New York fever never gets over it, and it was so in this case. Tom Stafford was never weary of chanting the praises of his native city; and thinking, like the young fool I was, that money lay about its streets, to be picked up by any lad of spirit, I determined to go. I had saved up quite a number of dollars from my earnings, and taking the Shore Line Railroad, so as to stop off at Guilford and say farewell to my father, I started for New York one winter's day, full of pride and hope."

Embler paused. The air was very thick with shadows now. With a hurried gesture of repulsion, the man dashed his hand across his eyes, as if to sweep away some horrid vision before he resumed the revelations of his past life.

"Well," he went on, "dazzled by these stories, and over-confident in the strength of my youth, I went to New York, and to that most unhappy step I owe my ruined life. Aye, Oscar, my dear boy, it is terrible for a man to stand helpless, and feel himself dragged down and down; for his soul to stand outside his own life and see it spoiled and broken—and that has been my fate. Do you wonder now if my shopmates have thought me a little dull. and grave beyond my years?"

For answer, the faithful Oscar pressed his friend's arm as they turned from Collis street

into Hamilton, and strode northward toward their home.

"It was not that I failed," continued Eugene. "It is true that I, as well as thousands like me, didn't find New York to be the gold-mine I had dreamed of; but for all that, I had no cause to grumble. I soon secured work under a first-rate engine-builder, for I had long ago made up my mind that I would be one of the first in that calling, and I had worked, and worked hard, too, in a machine-shop in Boston; and now, although I had to begin low down, I kept my eyes open, and worked harder than ever, and by the time I had been there eighteen months I was earning my fifteen dollars a week, and not killing myself either. That was all right enough, and I was able to send my father a trifle now and then, as he was getting well along in years, and, as I learned by his rare letters, was without very steady work. This went on for another year. I was making my way steadily, and earning more money than I could have hoped, when suddenly all was changed."

Swiftly and silently now he strode along. It seemed as if the shadows of the past flocked about him again so thickly that they stifled him.

He kept silent for such a length of time that at last Sherman asked quietly, "What changed it, Eugene?"

His answer soon came, bursting passionately from the strong man's lips, as if half in agony, half welcoming the relief of utterance.

"A woman!"

"A woman?" echoed his companion in accents of surprise, for Eugene Embler was the last man whom he or most people would have suspected of any entanglement of that kind.

"Aye, a woman—if it is not a libel upon the sex to call her one. Women such as she are at the root of half the crime and misery in the world," returned the young foreman, with bitterness and anguish in his voice.

"What did she do?" asked Oscar, in a hesitating way, half afraid of the sudden outburst of passion of which he had been the witness, coming as it did from one usually so calm and self-controlled.

"Do?" echoed the elder man, with a harsh laugh; "ask rather what she did *not* do."

After a few moments spent in recovering command of himself, he added, in slow, deliberate tones, as if with every item which he enumerated in the black catalogue of her misdoings he was weighing again the misery this woman had caused him:

"She did what women of her kind love to do: entice, allure, befool, madden with passion, then

laugh, lie, and drive their victims to despair and to the devil."

"I am sorry for you, Eugene," said his companion. "Then it was this—"

"Yes, my boy, it was this that made me old before my time—a soured, disappointed man at heart, though I have tried my best to keep a brave face and a stiff upper lip before the world."

The younger man looked up at his friend as he blurted out in his honest, blunt style:

"But surely, Eugene, that's all over now? It couldn't go on forever, you know."

Embler turned upon his young companion a look of unutterable sadness, full of the misery of that despair which can only be realized by a strong man who finds himself confronted with one damning, crushing fact which not all his strength of soul or body can destroy.

"You don't understand, Oscar; you don't understand. It's not all over. It can and must go on until death cuts the thread."

"What is it, then? What do you mean, Eugene?" asked the young man, to whose mind the terrible truth had not yet presented itself.

"I mean, Oscar," answered Embler wearily, "that in the hot days of my youth I committed the most fatal folly that can blast and ruin a man's life. I married—yes, married—a vile

woman, and that woman still lives, and is still my wife."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Sherman, in consternation; "you *are* in a bad fix, old fellow—far worse than I had any idea of."

CHAPTER IX

THE LETTER BORDERED WITH BLACK—"I AM FREE!"

"Yes," said Embler with a groan, after a moment's pause, "I am in a bad fix—a very bad fix indeed, there's no mistake about that."

"Who was the woman you married?" asked Oscar hesitatingly.

"Woman? woman?" muttered Eugene. "She was one who had nothing womanly about her except the form—the ripe, red lips, the masses of black hair, the great, dark eyes, the soft, yielding figure, the tempting smile, and all the thousand deviltries with which such creatures bait the hooks for fools like me. Yes," he continued, "these were womanly enough, as such women go; but of modesty, truth, love, tenderness—all that makes up what the world means when it talks of woman—there was not one grain. A good woman, Oscar, is a wingless angel; a bad one, a devil in the flesh. This woman, this Ida Ingham, as she called herself—though very likely she had a dozen names, like most women of her class—turned my head. With every art that her sex can use she made one think that

her pink-and-white flesh held as true and pure a soul as its own beauty seemed to suggest. And she appealed to my manhood with a tale of loneliness and lack of sympathy, and a womanly craving for love that touched me, and made me, as I thought, her champion against a hard and cruel world. All lies, Oscar; all lies, lies, lies! But I believed in her, and from that it was an easy step to marriage—a step taken so quickly, in such a mad impulse of passion and of pity, that I had no time to think of what the consequences might be—consequences which have meant to me a miserable, broken life—a life of shame and sorrow.”

“But is it not over now?” asked Oscar Sherman, strongly moved by the recital of his friend’s story.

“No, and can never be, I tell you, until one of us is released by death. For my own part, I do not know whether this woman, who has the right to call herself my wife, is alive or dead. Years ago she left me—left me without a word. I loved her once, or thought I did; but even in the short time that our lives were lived together, I had learned enough of my wretched wife’s true character to know that I had fettered myself with the most awful curse that can drag a man down to despair. I can’t say with truth that her flight

was any grief to me. For the moment I drew a long breath, as I told myself that relief had come at last; but the tie remained and the shame remained—the legacy of my mad folly, my blind, unreasoning, boyish passion, on which this creature traded, never to be broken, never to be lost, never to be passed by—a misery to last me, so far as I could tell, all my life long.”

“Have you never heard of her since she left you?” asked Oscar Sherman, troubled to the bottom of his heart by the story of his friend.

“Never—not a word, not a sign, although it is five years now since she left me,” answered Embler, in low, excited tones.

“Then, don’t you think she is dead?”

“I cannot think so. I must have heard—and yet—no, no, it cannot be. Good women die too soon; but women like my wife—oh, God! that she should be my wife—live on, and on, and on, poisoning the very air, polluting the earth, ruining men’s bodies and souls. They have no hearts, and people with no hearts live long.”

“Yet I should have thought she would have written to you, if only for money,” persisted Oscar.

A quick flush dyed his companion’s face as he answered:

“Women like that, so long as they keep their beauty, do not need such poor moneyed help as

I could give them. It was not for money that Ida Ingham first took up with me. God help me! I don't know what it was that led her to smile upon me and dazzle me into madness. In truth, I believe she had, or should have had, money of her own; but a brother—a clever fellow with the pen, and a consummate villain in every way—by an audacious forgery, robbed her of it. She had a brother and a sister, for even such creatures as she do not always stand alone in the world, but I can't say positively that I ever saw either of them; that is—but never mind that. I—well, I saw some one only to-day who reminded me strangely of her, though I cannot think that the resemblance was more than a mere chance."

"But can't you find out—"

"Why should I? What could I gain? If I could gain my freedom! Ah, if I could but get that!" and Eugene Embler sighed like a man who had well-nigh given up all hope.

"I understand," said Sherman quietly.

"Yes, it is as you think," answered Eugene, gravely. "It is only since I have known Mildred Manning that I have felt to the uttermost the terrible misery that I have laid up for myself. I don't know—perhaps I may be deceiving myself, for I dare not speak to her, and yet I cannot but think that if I were but free, the greatest happi-

ness that a man can know this side of heaven—the love of a pure, good woman—might be mine.”

“I am sure of it,” said Sherman, with conviction in his tones as well as in his words.

But Eugene Embler made a sign as if he would ask him to say no more. The thought of so much happiness being within reach, yet that he dare not stretch out his hand to take it, was intolerable; and with a sharp spasm of pain distorting his features, he said, in low, hoarse tones:

“Don’t tell me that, Oscar. It is the greatest joy and the greatest misery I could know.

Then, after a moment’s silence, he added, more calmly:

“We are getting near home now. Let us forget all that has passed, as far as we can. It has been painful enough to me to call up this wretched story of my past life, but I am glad that I have done so, for now you know my secret, and you, at least, can do me justice.”

By this time the two men had reached and crossed Wooster street, and now they kept on up Hamilton until they were more than half-way to Chapel, when they stopped in front of a house where the lights were still burning in several of the rooms, and there was the sound of music and laughter in the parlor.

They ascended the steps to the front door,

which, not being locked, Oscar at once opened; and, without pausing for a moment in the hall, they ascended to their own room on the third floor.

It was Embler who opened the chamber-door, and, striking a match, lighted the gas. There was a table just in front of him, and the first thing to attract the attention of the unhappy man, as he put the burned match in a receptacle for the purpose, was a letter lying conspicuously in the very center of the table, and close by the receptacle, where it could not fail to catch his eye.

The letter bore his address in a weak, straggling, woman's handwriting, and—which was the first thing Embler observed—was deeply bordered with black.

Oscar Sherman, who was tired with his long tramp, had noticed nothing. Intent upon relieving himself of his heavy boots, he had flung himself into the nearest chair, not even glancing at the table, and his first intimation that anything had happened was conveyed by a sharp, peculiar cry from his friend.

Looking up, he saw Eugene standing like a man suddenly stricken into stone, holding an open letter in his hand, gazing at it with wide-opened eyes, and with lips that moved, but without word or sound.

"What is it, Eugene? what is it?" asked Oscar Sherman, sure that something extraordinary had happened.

For a moment Eugene Embler seemed as if he had heard nothing. Then, turning to Oscar, still holding the letter in his hand, he gasped out in hoarse, excited tones:

"See! see!—this letter—this letter! She is dead! she is dead! And—God forgive me for rejoicing!—I—I am glad, for *I am free!*"

CHAPTER X

MRS. CRANDALL AND BRIAN HAWKES—THE SUPERINTENDENT'S MODEL

Upon the morning following his escape from a tragic and untimely death in the waters of the Quinnipiac, Brian Hawkes woke comparatively well. There was still a little lameness from a blow he had received on his leg and foot, but all signs of feverishness had left him, and his head was as cool and clear, and as ready for the first bit of deviltry within his reach, as ever it was in all his life.

"Eh, but *you* weren't born to be drowned, I reckon," was Mrs. Charity Crandall's dry salutation when, upon her inquiry early in the morning as to the condition of her unexpected and unwelcome guest, that gentleman had answered with a question as to what he could have for breakfast.

"I thought last night you'd eaten your last bite and taken your last sup on this earth," said Mrs. Crandall, and there was a disappointed inflection in her voice which seemed to add, of its own accord, "and small would have been my mourning for you if you had."

But the good woman kept this sentiment to herself so far as actual words went, and set to work to prepare a meal with such activity that by the time Brian Hawkes had got into his clothes, as comfortable a breakfast smoked for him upon the widow's table as heart could wish.

"Hash, pork-chops, and griddle-cakes," he began as he sat down, sniffing up the comforting steam with a grimace; "is that the best you can give me?"

"The best! It's the best anybody could give you to break the neck of a long fast," said Mrs. Crandall, adding, with a toss of the head: "But it don't seem to be to your taste, sir, and God forbid that such good food should be wasted on a thankless stomach. It would be just casting pearls before swine—no more, no less."

Brian Hawkes glanced up at her sharply. He had no particular taste for this blunt, outspoken, touchy Yankee widow, who resented his distaste for her wholesome dishes as though he had offered her a personal insult. Still, for reasons of his own, he had no wish to quarrel with her, so he only said, in his mildest manner:

"Well, Mrs. Crandall, tastes differ; and if I don't like the dishes before me, the loss is mine, no doubt."

"You're right there, sure enough, sir; but if I were a young man like you, I'd just save myself a

peck of trouble in the future by praying to be delivered from a proud bearing and a high stomach."

"Well, praying for anything isn't much in my line," returned Hawkes; and lifting a cover as he spoke, from one of two dishes just then brought in, he added, "Ah! what have I here?"

"Well, that's as fine a fish as has come out of the water this season," replied the landlady, "and here's fried ham and eggs; so, whatever your taste is, if there's any reason in you at all, you'll not go hungry for the want of something to satisfy your liking."

"Excellent! I'm as hungry as a wolf, and this just suits me," exclaimed Hawkes. "No, don't run away, Mrs. Crandall," he quickly added, as the widow seemed about to leave him to consume his meal in solitary state. "Tell me, was I *very* bad when they brought me in here last evening?"

"Well, as for bad—you've soon got over it; but there's no denying that for a time you looked uncommonly queer," returned the lady.

"And afterward?" said Hawkes, with a rapid glance at his companion.

"Afterward?" echoed Mrs. Crandall. "Well, for a time you seemed to be out of your head, with your jabbering and muttering, and I thought once that I'd have to send for a doctor who understands insane cases; for, good gracious me! I

thought you must be beside yourself to talk such a mess of stuff as you did."

"What did I say?" asked Hawkes, pretending to go on with his breakfast, but waiting for her reply with an eagerness which he could not hide.

"I told you last night," answered the widow hastily, for she had no mind to be cross-examined in this fashion.

"But I forget—"

"And why should my old memory be better than your young one?" retorted Mrs. Crandall, with such an air of decision that Hawkes saw it would do him no good and afford him no information to pursue the subject any further. So he changed his ground.

"Well, never mind—it's a matter of no consequence," he said, with a forced laugh; "only a man likes to know that he hasn't made *too* big a fool of himself when his wits were wandering. But tell me—that beautiful girl who was here last night—"

Mrs. Charity Crandall pulled him up short.

"I know nothing about her. Pretty girls are not so scarce in this part of New England. There's that waiting-maid of mine—she's not so ill-looking."

"I mean Miss Manning—you know her?"

"Oh, yes; I know Mildred Manning well enough; and no wonder, she happens to be my niece;

and let me tell you, she's not the sort of girl that *you* need to trouble your head about," and with that the widow moved away.

But Hawkes quickly replied:

"Ah! I might have known she was a relation by the likeness between you."

To which audacious piece of flattery Charity Crandall returned no other answer than a contemptuous snort as she went out of the room to attend to her other guests.

"Her niece, is she?" Hawkes muttered to himself when left alone, "and Marshall Manning's daughter; and Eugene Embler is sweet on her, is he? Curse him! I wonder if he knew me. I wonder if Ida ever told him that but for my little trick when the old man died, she and he would have had the money which I so hugely enjoyed to the very last dollar. Jove! I was always clever with my pen; I took the writing prize at school every time; I did some nice work in Chicago, but I never put my talent to such good use as when I made my father sign that 'unnatural' will in favor of his beloved and dutiful son Jas—h'm, I should say Pey—no! Brian, and cutting dear Ida—and Dora, too, for that matter—off with a hundred dollars for a mourning outfit. Well," he continued, after a moment of serious thought, "I believe Ida suspected something, if she did not know it; and if Embler knew, what might

not he have discovered! Curse him, he may be dangerous yet, especially if Ida—but that is impossible. Women don't go back to their dearly beloved husbands after a fling of a half a dozen years or more, and if they do, husbands don't exchange confidences with them; it would be a little too awkward for both. And if he does know of that little affair of mine, I have a better card to play against him. He can't get over a marriage register and certificate. No, he can't do that; so, curse him, I'll spoil his game with the girl anyhow, and if he seems likely to be troublesome—" but just here his amiable reflections were brought to a sudden end by the entrance of Marshall Manning.

"I am glad to see you so well, sir," were the old superintendent's first words; and Brian Hawkes, eager to ingratiate himself with the father of Mildred, put out his hand with a graceful air of gratitude.

"Thank you, my friend; I suppose it *was* a bit of a squeak. But 'all's well that ends well.'"

"Do you go back to the Elliott House, in the city, to-day, sir?" asked Manning, hoping, though he scarcely knew why, that the answer would be "yes."

"Well," replied Brian Hawkes slowly, as if there was something on his mind which he was debating with himself even while he spoke, "I

think not. I'm a little bit lame; besides, I'm very comfortable here, and I have a fancy to stop right where I am for a day or two. You see, I have no one to trouble about me," he added, with an assumption of frankness—"not a soul in the wide world; so I'll just send a note to the landlord of the Elliott House, and tell him to expect me when he sees me. By the way, Mr. Manning, I should like to go over your cursed works, and see that engine and the yacht, too, when my foot and ankle are not quite so painful."

"When you please, sir," answered Manning, with a slight frown; "but I wouldn't abuse the works. They haven't their equal in this country, and they furnish more than two hundred families with their daily bread, so that—"

"So that you don't like even to hear their name taken in vain," laughed Hawkes lightly. "I respect your prejudices, Mr. Manning, and I won't abuse the works again."

"When do you think you will pay us your contemplated visit, sir?" asked the superintendent, who could not bear to contemplate frittering away hours of his precious time with a visitor like this feather-headed gentleman, who would probably be just as wise when he came away as when he entered the great gate.

"I can't say at this moment. You seem to

grudge me your time, Mr. Manning," said Hawkes, rather sourly.

"It isn't that I grudge *you* my time any more than another, Mr. Hawkes. I grudge *all* waste of time—even that I take to eat my meals."

"But why? I should have thought you would be glad of a little rest now and then."

"Rest—rest? What have I to do with rest till my work is done—my model perfected?" returned Marshall Manning, with a look in his eyes which seemed to say that although his body was in Charity Crandall's "Quiet Home," his mind was still with his beloved model in the pretty little cottage in the vicinity of the Cove.

A gleam of quick intelligence flashed from Hawkes' dark eyes, as he thought he saw his way to getting at least one member of the Manning household on his side.

"I understand. Your model? An inventor, Mr. Manning?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Well, yes, sir; in a small way. But some day, if I have but the health and the time, and the—"

"Money?" suggested Hawkes, with an easy smile, as Manning stopped suddenly and looked a little confused.

"Well, yes, sir—if I must say it—the money. Nothing can be done without money—"

"And brains."

"Oh, brains, of course; but there are many men who ought to bring forth good fruit to the world, who fail to do so for lack of the means to help them to do their work."

An evil smile flitted across the thin lips of Brian Hawkes as he listened to the enthusiast; but it was with an earnest face, in which Manning seemed to read an honest interest in him and in his plans, that the subtle villain replied:

"I must see this invention of yours, Mr. Manning. If it is a good thing, I can promise you it sha'n't be lost for want of a little money to bring it to perfection."

A flush of gratification spread over the inventor's thoughtful countenance, and he replied, in tones in which he could not repress the accents of eagerness:

"You, sir—you? It is very kind of you to say that—you know so little of me, sir; and besides, I didn't think—" he stopped abruptly, and Hawkes interrupted him with a pleasant laugh:

"That I cared for that sort of thing. My dear Mr. Manning, a man may not be blessed with much brains himself, but it doesn't follow that he can't appreciate them in other people. I shall certainly come and see this model of yours, if you will let me."

"I shall be delighted, sir, delighted," cried

the enthusiast, every other consideration promptly blotted out by the crowning fact that here was a gentleman, apparently, with plenty of money at his command, not only taking a deep interest in his invention, but volunteering to find the means to bring it to that state of perfection which was the very dream and purpose of his life.

CHAPTER XI

THE HAWK SWOOPS

"By the way," continued the tempter, not giving his victim time for a moment's sober thought, "I know that experiments are expensive, and I feel so sure that there's a fortune in your invention, if you think so, that I should be loath to see it hindered. Come, I happened to cash a little check yesterday before I came here. Let me lend you something to keep moving with, just to show that I am in earnest, you know."

By an unhappy conjunction of circumstances, Marshall Manning could not deny that his experiments *were* expensive, and that they had, indeed, just reached a critical point, where failure or success might almost be said to depend upon his obtaining certain additional tools and appliances, for the purchase of which he had no funds.

The temptation was strong. Had it been anything concerning his own comfort, Marshall Manning would never have put himself under an obligation to anyone; but it was for his model—for

his invention, the beloved offspring of his brain; the fruit of thousands of toilsome hours and sleepless nights. And so he yielded, and when he returned to the works it was with two hundred and fifty dollars in his pocket, and the intention of asking for a short leave of absence that he might visit a particular establishment in New York, where he knew he could get just what he wanted to perfect his work and realize the ambition of his life.

Left to himself, Brian Hawkes limped to the couch in the inner room, where he lay smoking and thinking for an hour or two, evidently well pleased with himself, for every now and then he smiled in a satisfied way, as if he already saw some villainous scheme triumphant.

Toward noon he left the Quiet Home, and strolled as if by chance toward Marshall Manning's cottage. To his annoyance he saw nothing of Mildred or Elsie, and he did not deem it prudent to go so far as to call upon any such transparent excuse as he could devise. So he returned to his temporary lodgings at Mrs. Crandall's, first going to the engine and boiler works for a few minutes, and discovering, to his surprise and satisfaction, that Manning had already obtained his leave of absence and gone away in a high state of jubilation.

This was the last detail wanting to confirm

Hawkes in his plan, and he told himself that everything and everybody seemed disposed to play into his hands.

There was only one drop of gall in his cup. He had caught sight of Eugene Embler at the works, and although it was but a momentary glimpse, it served to show him that the young foreman's handsome face wore an expression of content, and more than content, which he could not understand.

During the afternoon Hawkes rested, smoking and reading the newspapers; but as the long hand of the old-fashioned clock, which stood like a sentinel in one corner of the room, crept slowly round toward six o'clock, he rose, took up his hat, and went down toward the engine and boiler works.

As he walked along, his mind was full of agitating and evil thoughts—disquietude on account of a celebrated detective whose name he had seen more than once in the newspapers he had been reading; fear of Eugene Embler and the information which he might have of his ill-doings; gloating over the charms of Mildred Manning, coupled with a burning desire to thwart the man who had done him the service of saving his life; and, strongest and keenest of all, the feeling that he held in his hand the trump card, so far as Mildred Manning was concerned, in the shape

of indisputable proof of Eugene Embler's marriage.

On reaching the vicinity of the works, he stopped a moment, looked about him to see whether there were any signs of Mildred, but seeing none, he turned back, crossed Forbes avenue, and took his way down Townsend avenue toward the cottage.

Half-way between the works and the cottage he met her, and by what he deemed one more stroke of luck, Elsie was not with her sister. Mildred herself, too, was not bound for the works, but was on her way to her aunt's little hotel, and when Brian Hawkes addressed her with rather exaggerated politeness, she could find no reasonable excuse for refusing to stop and speak to him.

With a preliminary flourish of compliments to herself, and assuming entire ignorance of Marshall Manning's whereabouts, Brian Hawkes at once attacked the girl on her weakest side—her father—saying, with a ready lie, that he was on his way to ask him to show him the model of which he had heard.

"But my father is not at home," said Mildred.

"Indeed? Well, I must call some other time," answered Hawkes pleasantly enough.

"I am sorry," began Mildred; but her companion interrupted her by saying, with a passionate look from his handsome dark eyes:

"There is nothing to be sorry about, Miss Manning. I have had the pleasure of meeting you again—the gre test pleasure I could have desired."

Mildred Manning blushed hotly, and stammered out:

"You will excuse me if I hurry away, Mr. Hawkes; my aunt expects me."

"Are you sure you mean your aunt?" said Hawkes rudely, a sudden fit of jealousy seizing him; for in his hot-headed way he was really infatuated with the beauty of this girl, whom he had only seen once before.

"Mr. Hawkes!" cried Mildred indignantly.

"Now, don't be angry. I would not say a word to offend you, Miss Manning; but there, I suppose I'm a fool. No one has ever cared what I said or did, all my life long. Why should I think anyone would do so now?" and he sighed heavily.

With her acute womanly sympathy, Mildred found it impossible not to feel a little sorry for this young man, so handsome and, as it seemed, so unhappy.

Noticing a change in her mood, Brian Hawkes hastened to take advantage of it in his audacious way—all the more dangerous as it was skillfully made to bear the semblance of spontaneous, impulsive frankness.

'Miss Manning, do you believe in love at first sight?'

Mildred started. They were now in a quiet spot, just off the main avenue, and she did not wish to discuss such a subject with a stranger under such conditions.

"I—I know nothing about it," she stammered out, making at the same time as though she would move away.

But he took no notice of that, and rejoined quickly:

"Love is a sealed book to you, then, so far? Ah! Miss Manning, so it is with me. All my life long I have never known what it was to be loved, or to love," he continued, lowering his voice, and speaking with passionate eagerness, "until yesterday."

"I don't understand—I must go," began Mildred confusedly, although she still felt a little sorry for this handsome stranger, who seemed so sad and lonely, and was still reluctant to do anything to hurt his feelings. In addition to which Mildred Manning was a woman, and what woman could be altogether angry with a man who so plainly admired her? She did not fear him yet.

So she lingered a moment, and Hawkes took advantage of his opportunity, and with considerable adroitness altered his tactics. With down-

cast eyes and an air of penitent humility, as if he felt that he had gone too far, he said:

"But I must not tell you now—another time. Your father is my friend, Miss Manning. I am deeply and honestly interested in what I have heard about his invention"—as a matter of fact, he did not know whether the great project was to result in a patent clothes-pin or a steam-engine—"and I am most anxious to see it."

Then, with a sudden change of manner, he continued:

"But what does it matter?—what does anything matter to a man like me, without a friend in the world or an object in life?"

Mildred's tender heart was quickly touched, and the double reference to her father and to his own loneliness fairly got the better of her judgment. In all good faith she answered very gently:

"You must not speak like that, Mr. Hawkes. It pains me."

With a hasty exclamation of delight, Brian Hawkes eagerly replied:

"Oh, Miss Manning, how good you are! how kind to take any interest in a fellow like me! You little know what it is to me to feel that at last there is someone who cares. Oh, Mildred! you have given me a new life! you have given me an object in life; for—can you not see it?—I love you! I love you!"

Mildred, terrified all at once by the situation into which her innocently meant sympathy had betrayed her, looked at her companion in dumb amazement, and would have left him; but he seized her hand, and continued in low, eager tones:

"No, Mildred, hear me. Do not turn from me. You are the first woman whom I have ever loved; the first who has spoken kindly to me. Now, you must listen to me."

"I cannot, Mr. Hawkes; I cannot," cried the girl, in low tones, as she at last realized her position, and in dread lest any of the workmen should come home that way; for at that moment the five o'clock whistle vibrated on the air, setting them all at liberty.

She was in an agony of mind, for if she should be seen with this man, what would be thought of her? What would Eugene Embler think? Although he had as yet spoken no words of love to her, she felt no words were needed. She knew his passion for her, and when she looked into her own heart and asked it if his love was returned, the answer sent the warm blood sweeping through her veins, coloring her face and throat.

It was growing dark; already the distant hills grew blurred and dull in the on-coming haze, and shadows of the night. It was the hour of

gloaming, the time for love and dalliance, and Brian Hawkes was in no mood to be denied.

Could he but keep her a little while longer, he trusted to his persuasive tongue to win his way with this machinist's daughter, to whom—save the mark! he felt that he condescended in admiring her at all.

He cast a swift glance around, and then drew her swiftly into the shadow of a neighboring hedge.

CHAPTER XII

THE HAWK COMES TO GRIEF—A THREAT

Mildred Manning gave a startled cry; but her companion kept her hand tightly in his, and began to plead with all the force he could command.

O," Mildred, Mildred! do not blame me for loving you! I cannot help it. A man is not his own master in such things. Since yesterday I have thought of nothing but you. O, Mildred, Mildred, Mildred! the dear name has rung in my ears since I first heard it, yesterday. Yesterday? it seems a year ago. Love me, dear; love me—as I love you."

"Let me go, sir! Let me go, Mr. Hawkes! You don't understand me. I am sorry for you, but—"

"Yes, I do; I understand you better than you understand yourself. You will let me come and see you? Let me walk home with you now, dear?"

"Impossible, Mr. Hawkes;" and the girl made another effort to free herself. But the scoundrel held her hand tightly clasped in his own.

He knew that each moment as it passed increased the risk of discovery, and that therefore the chances of Mildred's calling out or making any active resistance to his importunities, grew less and less.

His quick brain, rapidly fertile of evil things, took in all sides of the situation in a moment, and he smiled grimly in full enjoyment of the embarrassment which Mildred had brought upon herself by her good-hearted tolerance of his presence.

As the steam-whistle shrieked out its dismissal of the workmen for the day, he could have shouted aloud in triumph. He could read Mildred's true and modest nature like a book, and could realize, by mere contrast with his own delight in the situation, the misery and shame which discovery would surely cast upon so sensitive a nature as that of his companion.

So, for all answer, and smiling at the dumb pleading in her upturned eyes, he seized her other hand and held her there, powerless to move and afraid to make a sound of protest, lest the very act which might bring help should prove her own undoing.

Mildred Manning now began to be alarmed in gravest earnest. The evil passion of her companion burned in his handsome eyes and quivered on his pleading tongue.

Scarcely above a whisper, Brian Hawkes resumed his unwelcome overtures.

"Come, my darling, you can't be angry with me. You don't mind my loving you?"

"Oh, yes—yes. You must not speak of love to me? Let me go, Mr. Hawkes. If you are a gentleman—if you are a man, let me go."

"Not until you have promised to think of me; not until you have promised that I shall have another opportunity of pleading my cause with you; not until you have given me some sign that you are not angry with me—that you forgive me if I have seemed too hasty in my love-making;" and he drew her closer to him, despite her efforts to regain her freedom.

"Mr. Hawkes," she panted, frightened more and more by his violent words, and still more lest she should be discovered, "Mr. Hawkes, let me go home now, and I will forgive you everything."

She struggled to free herself from his clasp, but he held her fast, and slipped one arm round her waist.

"Mildred, Mildred! can't you see how I love you? Can't you be a little kind to me? Can't you pity me, love me, just a little? Kiss me, dear," and he bent forward till his face almost touched the girl's. But she shrank from him, covering her face with her one disengaged hand.

"How dare you! Let me go, sir! You will suffer for this!" she cried, scarcely above a whisper, and ready to faint with mingled terror and shame.

Her last words let loose the devil within him, and he almost hissed out the words as he retorted:

"I know now what you mean. I know what all your mock modesty is worth. You want to keep your kisses for Eugene Embler, do you? Curse him! You are a fool. You are wasting your time. He can never marry you; I can stop—"

But he said no more, for the girl's struggles grew more violent as her terror increased.

"Let me go, sir! You have no right to speak his name. Let me go!"

"Ha, ha! Let you go! I—"

At that moment a man came rushing forward like the wind. There was a thud, a whirl, and with a gasp and a groan, Brian Hawkes fell heavily to the ground.

Stunned for a moment by the heavy blow he had received and the violence of the fall, the villain lay upon the hard earth, dazed and silent. Then, pale as death, and with rage and hatred flaming in his dark eyes, he raised himself slowly, as if with pain, and stood before Eugene Embler, trembling with passion.

"You blackguard! how dare you assault me like this?" he hissed, furiously, clenching his

fists, but drawing no nearer to the man who stood quietly looking at him with indignation and contempt.

"No low name-calling, Mr. Hawkes, if you please. And as for the blackguard, you needn't go far to find *him*;" and Eugene Embler's honest eyes blazed with fierce anger as he thought of the insult to which this "gentleman" would have subjected the girl for whose lightest smile he would have been content to serve seven years, as Jacob did of old.

"You impudent brute, you shall pay for this," continued Hawkes.

But Embler interrupted him.

"Once for all, Mr. Hawkes," he said, "if there's a brute here—and a scoundrel to boot, for that matter—it is not I; and if you value your skin, you'll just get out of this as fast as ever you can, without more foul words. My patience has its bounds."

"*Your* patience, indeed," retorted Brian Hawkes, with an attempt at a sneer. "And who are you, Mr. Eugene Embler, that *your* patience should be considered—a common machinist?"

"I saved your life but yesterday, and, besides that, I would rather not harm such a poor, miserable creature, if I can help it. But you try me hard; you try me hard."

Mildred Manning laid her hand on Eugene's arm, in gentle protest.

He turned to her with a look of such reverence and devotion, that even Brian Hawkes flushed as he involuntarily contrasted it with his own unmannerly freedom. But the momentary fit of shame soon passed, leaving him more bitterly inflamed against this man than ever, and with a resumption of his attempt at bravado, he blustered out:

"I said that you should pay for this brutality, Eugene Embler—and you shall. *You* dare assault a gentleman—"

"Stay, sir," interrupted Embler, with dignity; "don't profane that good old word. A gentleman should be gentle, true; should reverence women, not insult them; should protect them, not terrify them. *You* are no gentleman, Brian Hawkes—if that's your name."

"How dare you insult me, sir?" cried the man, half beside himself with impotent rage.

"If the truth is an insult, so much the worse for those that make it so," answered Embler dryly. "Come away, Mildred; this is no scene for you. Let me see you safely to your door," and he moved a step or two in that direction, with Mildred, white and trembling, by his side.

But Brian Hawkes had no mind to let him go so easily, and, with a final outburst of fury, he cried:

"This is no affair of yours. By what right do *you* interfere, I would like to know?"

Eugene Embler turned upon him like a lion. The fierce indignation and scathing contempt blazing in his gray eyes and written on every feature of his handsome face seemed to make the other man visibly cower and shrink into insignificance as he stood there, his dark, sinister face distorted with devilish malice.

"By the right of every honest man to protect an innocent girl against a villain!" came the answer in ringing tones.

Brian Hawkes quailed before the other's scorn, but he opened his trembling lips again, and would still have made some poor attempt to brave it out, but Embler silenced him by a gesture.

"Not a word, sir. You have said more than enough already. Go! and thank your lucky stars that you got off with a whole skin. Not a word, sir—no! not a word," he continued, as the man made as if he would speak; and there was something in his manner which told the other that he would do well to take the advice while he could.

He turned to go, but when he had put a few paces between them he said, with a look of intense malice:

"It's your turn now, Eugene Embler. The day will come when it will be mine!" and with this he limped away, sullen and scowling, his black heart aching with its longing for revenge.

CHAPTER XIII

BUCK LAWLESS REAPPEARS—MILDRED SAYS "YES"—
THE MALIGNANT FACE

Brian Hawkes had not gone far when he heard the sound of heavy footsteps behind him, and turned quickly, wondering whether Embler had followed him.

But he saw only the figure of a great, ungainly, ugly-looking fellow of about forty years of age, with coarse tangled hair and a villainous leer upon his face.

Brian Hawkes seemed to recognize him at the first glance, and then quickly remembered that he had seen him slouching along the road near the engine and boiler works, with something concealed under his coat, the night before.

The man lurched along heavily, half drunk as usual, and Hawkes, who had no particular desire for another encounter, and had an idea that the fellow might mean to rob him, for it was now growing quite dark and the road was deserted, slackened his pace slightly, with a view to letting the man get in front of him.

But to his surprise, and somewhat to his alarm,

as soon as the ruffian came up with him he halted, and putting his hideous face, set in a frame of ragged dark hair, close to Hawkes' pale one, muttered in the low, hoarse accents of a voice roughened by drink and exposed to all weathers:

"I saw it all, guv'ner."

Hawkes started as though the man had leveled a pistol at him.

"What the deuce do you mean?" he stammered.

"You saw it all? *What* did you see?"

"I saw it all," repeated the ugly brute, with a chuckle, "and what's more, guv'ner, I heard it all—and if that ain't enough for you, it is for Buck Lawless."

Brian Hawkes remained silent for a moment or two, thinking. His keen brain soon took in the pros and cons of the situation, and turning to the uncouth villain at his side, he said curtly:

"Come with me."

And the two men, a strangely assorted pair, walked away together, the living embodiment of that union of brute force, keen brain, and unscrupulous malice which forms the most fatal combination against which an honest man can have to fight.

In the meanwhile Eugene Embler and Mildred Manning had moved away in the direction of her father's cottage, both agitated beyond measure, and both feeling instinctively, though one of them

scarcely liked to acknowledge it even to herself, that a crisis had come for them both; that the moment had arrived which might prove a turning-point in both their lives.

For a few moments they walked side by side in silence. The minds and hearts of both were very full, and both seemed afraid to let them overflow in words.

Very soon, however, Eugene Embler broke the silence by saying quietly: "I'm glad I happened to be passing just in time to save you from that scoundrel."

"I am glad too, and very, very grateful," faltered Mildred, thankful that the darkness had fallen, and that her companion could not see the vivid blushes which mantled her face as she recalled the scene. "But don't let us speak of it, I beg. I would like to forget it as soon as possible."

"Yes, yes—that is best," said Embler eagerly; then he added, in a lower tone, "but there is one thing I want to say to you, if I may."

He waited a moment as if for an answer, but none came; so he continued in low, earnest tones:

"You remember that scoundrel asked me by what right I interfered?"

"Yes," answered Mildred softly.

"I gave him such answer as sprang to my lips in the heat of the moment."

"And a noble answer, too," said Mildred firmly.

"It was the best—the only one I could give him," returned Embler. Then, speaking rapidly and eagerly, he continued: "Yes, it was the only one I could give him then. May I hope that if I should meet him again—which God forbid!—I may have some better answer to give him—some better right to give it?"

Mildred Manning trembled with emotion as she listened to the rich, impassioned tones of her companion's voice, in which truth, and love, and honor—all that holds women dear, and all that women themselves hold dear—rang with every word.

A great happiness surged up in her heart, and she knew that only one answer was possible for her to give with truth. Yet her maidenly modesty shrank from revealing the secret of her heart at the first touch, so she remained silent a while.

Dreading lest by any unhappy blunder he had misread her, and that she was really indifferent to him, Eugene Embler could ill wait with any show of patience, and in a few moments he said, more earnestly than ever:

"Forgive me if I have spoken too soon—if I have taken you by surprise. This wretched cur has forced me to tell you now what I should perhaps have kept in my own heart awhile. Yet, Mildred," he continued, "it has been there long already;

longer than you know—from the first moment that my eyes rested on your sweet face. O Mildred, tell me I have not harbored this love for you in vain. Tell me, dear, can you—will you—do you care for me just a little?"

He waited for her answer in a silence full of intense emotion. All the barren wretchedness of the past years rose up before him, and then, stretching away, hidden, it is true, but in rosy clouds like those of a summer dawn, a vision of a happy future, full of peace and love.

He had not long to wait, for Mildred Manning was no coquette. Her honest nature could not let her speak anything but the simple truth, and in quiet, firm accents she replied:

"Not just a little, Eugene; I love you with all my heart."

The narrow road was empty but for themselves. They felt for the first time the crowning happiness of human-kind, and their lips met in the pure, sacred love of a true man for a good woman.

Then for a little while they walked on in silence, happy in a happiness too perfect for words.

But by and by, when they had nearly reached her home, Eugene Embler turned to Mildred and said gravely:

"Mildred, my own dear wife to be, there is one thing I ought to tell you before I can claim you before the world."

Mildred looked up at him in the moonlight, which was just beginning to cast a few pale rays upon them as they walked. A faint expression of surprise was on her face, but she only answered softly:

"Well, dear, and what is that?"

Eugene Embler answered her slowly and gravely, with a question:

"Have you not wondered, Mildred, that I have waited so long to speak?"

"O Eugene!"

"Well, dear, that is an odd way to put it, perhaps; but, Mildred, you must have seen!"

"I did think that perhaps you—you gave me a thought now and then," said the girl archly.

"A thought? All my thoughts, dear. All my thoughts, all my hopes, all my aims, were for you; but, until yesterday, they were only torture to me."

"But why, Eugene?"

"Because I dared not speak to you."

Mildred laughed lightly.

"Were you afraid? Was I so alarming, then?" she asked.

"No, Mildred; it was not that. I could read your dear heart in your eyes. But for all that, I dared not speak."

"Then why?" asked Mildred again, a vague fear falling upon her that, after all, something was

going to rob her of this new-found happiness.

"There was something in my past life—something which, whenever I approached you, held me back," said Eugene Embler gravely.

Mildred started. A sudden terror took possession of her, and almost involuntarily she stammered out:

"He said there was something—he said you could not marry me."

"He? Who, in God's name?" cried Eugene.

"Mr. Hawkes."

"Mr. Hawkes!" echoed her companion, almost breathless with amazement. "What could he know? How could he know? And yet—"

He paused, for all at once there flashed across his mind the fact that when he had first seen Brian Hawkes he had seemed to recognize his face. Since then he had dismissed the notion as an impossible fancy, but now it recurred to him with tenfold force, yet he could not say for certain why the face seemed familiar.

But the evident pain in Mildred's tone made him hasten to at least set her mind at rest. With rapid, earnest utterance, he resumed:

"Yes, Mildred, there was a reason why I dared not speak, but that is all over now. True, that even now I had not meant to speak to you, had not that villain's conduct forced me to try and win the greatest right a man can have to protect

the woman he loves. There were things I would have done, statements I would have verified—though there is no doubt of their truth—and I would have spoken to your father first; but this man came between us—more than that, he gave me at least some right to guard you, as your father was not by. And then—O Mildred, Mildred!—can you blame me if I spoke?"

"I do not blame you, Eugene," she answered gently, "and I do not want to know anything that it would give you pain to tell me. I can trust you, dear."

"How good you are to me, Mildred! But I *will* tell you. The sorrow and the shame have passed away, and I can speak."

"The sorrow—and the shame?" echoed Mildred slowly, doubting if she had heard aright.

"The sorrow, dear, was mine; perhaps more than the shame. But she is dead, and I have no wish to speak ill of her beyond what the bare truth requires."

"Of *her*?"

"Yes, Mildred—of my dead wife!"

"Of—your—dead—wife?" repeated Mildred mechanically.

She did not understand. It seemed to her now as if there had been some truth in what Hawkes had said to her; as if there had been some ground for his cruel taunt.

"It is true, Mildred. But, dear, you need not mind my speaking of her. She is dead—and it is better that you should know the truth. You would not wish me, dear, to take you as my wife, in the sight of God and man, with a lie upon my lips?"

"Oh, no, no! Tell me, Eugene. It is best that I should know."

They had come to a stand now, and were in the shadow of an old elm, which overhung the roadway. They had raised their voices, too, in the excitement of the moment, and had not noticed the soft sound of a footstep on the grass which lay beyond the stone wall and hedge, nor did they see an evil face which peered out at them cautiously from behind the shelter of a great tree-trunk—a dark, malignant face, set in a frame of ragged, coarse hair.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SHADOW ON THE LOVERS' PATH—ONE OF DETECTIVE CLICKETT'S BLACK SHEEP

In all the confidence bred of solitude, the lovers spoke from heart to heart, Eugene Embler answering the beautiful girl first with a kiss, as if, dreading even the faintest possibility of his coming revelation raising a barrier between them, he would at least have the memory of her love to cherish forever more.

"It is not a very uncommon story, Mildred, and I will tell it to you as briefly as possible. It is the old tale, dear, of a stupid young fellow and a designing woman—of a boy's blind folly and its fatal ending. It was in New York that I met Ida Ingham. I was a foolish young fellow, and friendless—no one to guide me, no one to warn, no home-life worthy of the name, to keep me out of danger."

Mildred put her hand in his, and murmured very softly:

"Poor boy!"

Encouraged by her gentle words, he bent, and

kissed her again; then, in frank and simple language, told her the story of his life.

She listened in silence, full of sympathy for him, and not without a touch of sorrow, too, for the unhappy woman who, in her ignorance of the treasure she was losing, had thrown away the love of such a man.

Another listened too, though they knew it not—listened with ears as eager as her own—and chuckled grimly from time to time, as he crouched down in the shadow and drank in Eugene Embler's confession as it came word by word from his honest lips. And as he listened his vile nature reveled in the prospect of making use and profit in the future of all that he was learning.

And over them all the full moon sailed, pure and radiant as a maiden's soul. The meadow-land on the one hand, and the broad harbor on the other, lay ghostly gray in the silvery light; the great hill, surmounted by the ruins of old Fort Wooster, which, though silent, spoke eloquently of Revolutionary days, towered seemingly to the sky, touched into beauty by the tender light; and far away as eye could reach, the wide sweep of waters of the bay and sound lay at rest like a shield of burnished metal.

Nature was at its loveliest while these two plighted their faith and opened their hearts to

each other with all the fullness of new-born love and trust. Yet, amid these fairest scenes, fierce forces were at work, and even here, under the majestic shadow of a triumph of civilization, lay seething some of the basest, grossest passions of humanity.

Presently, with a gentle sigh as if she were loath to prolong this first hour of their new-found happiness, Mildred said:

"Elsie will think I am lost, dear. I must go home now."

"To-morrow, Mildred, I shall speak to your father. I shall ask him to spare me his treasure to be my own."

"And if he says 'No?'"

"I do not think he will. If he does—well, dear, you must make him say 'Yes' instead."

Mildred laughed softly; then, with a sudden sharp accent of fear in her voice, she said hurriedly:

"But to-morrow I may be afraid to go out. Suppose I met—"

"Brian Hawkes?" said Embler, in hard, stern tones.

There was a sudden movement in the deep shadow behind the tree, as a figure leaned forward to catch the words that were to follow.

"Yes, dear."

"You need not be afraid. The man is sure to

be a coward, as bullies always are, and I don't think he will trouble you again."

"But if—"

"If he does? By the heavens above us, he shall have reason to regret it to the latest day of his life," cried Embler fiercely.

Then, seeing that she looked frightened at his stern words, he continued, more gently:

"But there, dear, you need not be afraid of anything of the kind. Brian Hawkes has had one lesson, and I don't think he will be in a hurry for a second. No, Mildred, think no more of him—the scoundrel isn't worth it. He will be gone soon, no doubt. In the meantime, I think he has respect enough for his wretched carcass not to put it at my mercy again. I let him off easy this time, and he knows it; but if I had to deal with him again, upon my word, dear," and Eugene Embler laughed aloud in his new-found confidence and happiness, "I'm afraid what there was left of him would hardly be worth taking back to the city."

Then bending over her and lifting her face to his, he said in an earnest, ardent whisper:

"Think no more of him, dear. Let us forget the past and all that it held. It is dead; let it rest. The future is for us, Mildred, and in it I can see naught but happiness and love."

And they moved away slowly, rich in their

mutual love, willing to forget the past, happiest of the happy in the present, full of hope and confidence in the future.

Yet all the time, though they knew not of it, a dark figure slunk beside them, out of sight, dogging their footsteps—a black and hideous blot on the fair scene, like the shadow of impending doom.

And the dark figure followed them to the very door of the Manning cottage, and lingered there till the last good-nights were exchanged, and then, as Eugene started homeward, it followed on his track.

Meantime, while Mildred, full of her new-born happiness, was imparting to her sister, under a solemn promise of secrecy—for Eugene had, after some consideration, decided that it would be better not to speak to her father until the news which brought him his longed-for freedom was confirmed—the fact that the young foreman had asked her to be his wife; and while Embler himself was making his way to his boarding-house, on Hamilton street, with his brain in a whirl of joyous excitement, a very different scene was being enacted in Mrs. Crandall's Quiet Home.

That worthy woman had been considerably and very naturally surprised to find, on her return from a little business expedition to the

city, her unwelcome guest, Brian Hawkes, lying upon the lounge in the private sitting-room, and by him, in an arm-chair, quite at his ease, and talking in low, confidential tones, the dangerous ruffian whose mere presence, in her opinion, polluted her house.

Mrs. Charity Crandall made no pretense of being either more or less of a woman than the majority, and this state of things naturally stimulated her curiosity beyond the endurance of even the least inquisitive of her sex.

She decided, after a brief debate with herself, that it was her plain duty to learn, if possible, whether this meeting between a man of whom she had formed a very bad opinion, and one whom she already knew to be an unscrupulous ruffian, capable of any villainy, was innocent in its object, or, being the reverse, what rascality it had for its particular end.

It happened that the bar-room and public parlor were just then free of guests, so that there was absolutely nothing to divert Mrs. Crandall's attention, and at last, irritated beyond bearing by the dull, unintelligible muttering which reached her tantalized ears, she opened the door for the second time, and addressing Brian Hawkes in not too friendly tones, said:

"I see you're engaged, sir, but I thought I'd just ask if you're feeling as well to-night,"

and she looked hard at him as she spoke, and then glared resentfully at Buck Lawless.

"Yes, yes; I'm all right—don't you bother about me. I'll call you if I want you," answered Brian Hawkes brusquely.

Buck Lawless had turned at the sound of the widow's voice, and sat staring at her in a heavy, half-dazed fashion, for he was, as usual, rather the worse for liquor, and his sodden wits worked slowly.

"H'm; very well, sir," returned Mrs. Crandall, bridling up. "I thought maybe you might have been taken worse, and had asked Buck Lawless to nurse you, for I cannot think what else you could want of him; but if that's not the case, I beg your pardon for interrupting you, and I would just like to say that the bar-room is empty, and the sooner Buck Lawless is in it, and out of it too, for that matter, the better I shall be pleased."

"All right; don't worry about what doesn't concern you. He'll come when I'm done with him, and not before. Now, just let us alone, if you please, Mrs. Crandall—that's a good old soul. We will call you if we want anything."

"*We*, indeed, sir! Do you think I'm coming at the beck and call of Buck Lawless?" answered the widow. "I'd have you know that my private rooms are not for the like of him; and as for

you, sir—well, I know this same Buck Lawless as well, in fact, as though I'd gone through him with a lighted candle—one of the blackest of Detective Clickett's black sheep, and I wish you joy of your company;" and with a look of contemptuous indignation, which included both the men in its rapid glance, she left the room in her most stately manner; and taking up her knitting-needles, rattled them together over her work as fiercely as if they were the heads of the two men in the adjoining room.

It was evident, though, that Mrs. Crandall was ill at ease, and in a minute or so a thought seemed to strike her, calling up a gleam of satisfaction in her eyes and a shrewd smile to her lips; and directing her young waiting-maid to attend to anyone who might happen to drop in, the widow laid her knitting aside and betook herself to the rear of the house.

CHAPTER XV

AT THE STORE-ROOM WINDOW—NOTICE TO QUIT

In the back part of the Quiet Home, between the kitchen and the room in which Brian Hawkes and his disreputable companion were conversing, was a long, narrow store-room. It was an apartment that was kept carefully locked, and as of late years it had been under the charge of the cook, Mrs. Crandall had well-nigh forgotten its existence. But now the recollection of it came like an inspiration.

Without more ado the widow made her way to this store-room, and cautiously opening a little square window in it which communicated with the room where Brian Hawkes and Buck Lawless were seated, she could hear all that they had to say.

"A sour old harridan, poking and prying about," were the first words that reached her attentive ear.

She quickly recognized the speaker as Hawkes, and listened with righteous wrath and boiling blood as he sneeringly added:

"What the deuce was it to her, anyhow, if I

chose to have a talk with you here; eh, Buck, my boy?"

"A sour old harridan, am I?" she said to herself. "Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Brian Hawkes. Calling bad names breaks no bones, but I'll not forget your foul words, as you shall find out to your cost, one of these days, or my name's not Charity Crandall."

"A sour old harridan! So she is, guv'ner; so she is," growled his companion, with a drunken chuckle. "I ain't good enough for her private rooms, ain't I? Well, we'll see about that, we will."

"Ah! by the way, she said you were one of Detective Clickett's black sheep; is that so? Does he keep you under regular surveillance?"

"Not as I know on—not 'specially, I reckon. You see, guv'ner, I got into a leetle trouble with him through borrowin' the duds an' fixin's of a dead man I found on th' road. You see, I thought, bein' dead, he'd have no further use for 'em, but I was mistaken—a victim o' misplaced confidence, that's what I was."

"And so the dead man *had* further use for his clothes and fixings, did he?"

"Well. leastwise, his friends did. They kicked up an awful row, an' it ended in landin' me behind th' bars. An', t' tell th' plain truth, guv'ner, I've only jest got out, an' I

wouldn't be here t'night if t'wa'n't for th' time they knocked off on account o' good behavior, you understand."

"I see; but to return to this peppery old woman—"

"Ah, yes, confound her! She thinks herself so much better than other folks. Why, I'm dead certain she receives smuggled goods—'specially liquors—from th' masters an' mates o' vessels that come into this port, an' I've a good mind t' blow th' gaff on her. Wonder how she'd like her little crib shut up, an' herself sent to cool her heels in jail for a few weeks."

"One thing at a time—one thing at a time, my impetuous friend," answered Hawkes quietly. "You can play your own little game a week or a month hence. I'm no spoil-sport, and I won't stand in your way. But you must play mine first."

"O' course, guv'ner. When a man *is* a man, an' pays like a man, why I says that th' least another man can do is to treat him fair an' square. An' if you're fair an' square with Buck Lawless, you'll find Buck Lawless fair an' square with you."

"I don't doubt it," returned Hawkes, a little roughly; "but we needn't go into that now. All I care about, all I want to know is, do you want to earn a hundred dollars?"

"Do I? Don't I? Don't I look like th' sort o' man as *allers* wants t' turn an honest penny?" answered the villain, with another chuckle.

The good widow's curiosity was now raised to fever heat, and she scarcely trusted herself to breathe as she stood on tip-toe on a chair, drinking in every word, and confident she was about to overhear the detailed arrangements of some underhand plot.

Hawkes replied quickly:

"It isn't only a question of whether you *do*, you know, Buck; it's also whether you *can*."

"Can? I should just like to see the job I couldn't do for a hundred dollars."

"Well, then, listen to me; there must be no half measures."

"Don't believe in 'em, you bet," growled the villain.

"That's all right," Hawkes answered. "I hate him, and I mean to pay him in full; in full—do you understand?"

"Aye, I understand, guv'ner; an' you've come to th' right man to do it. I ain't one o' your delicate, kid-gloved squeamishers," continued the rascal huskily, "an' I ain't particular fond o' him myself."

"The deuce you're not!"

"No. Is it likely I should be? What am I? Who am I? Buck Lawless—Shady Buck—a thief,

a tramp, and a drunken brute," burst out the wretch suddenly, with a touch of tragic fierceness in his self-scorn which might have made some men feel a passing pang of pity even for him; "and he's—"

At this moment, critical to a degree, to Mrs. Crandall's unspeakable vexation, the shrill voice of Tillie, the waiting-maid whom she had left in charge in front, was heard calling her; and lest the girl's ill-timed zeal should alarm others, she was compelled to leave her point of vantage, not only to answer Tillie's question, but also to warn her, with an air of mystery, not to come screaming after her again.

Returning to the store-room as speedily as possible, Mrs. Crandall pushed open the window again very gently. To her vexation she discovered that one of the two men in the private room must have opened the side-window, for the rush of cold air was terrific, and the little sash would have closed with a slam, betrayed her position, and robbed her of her only chance of learning what deviltry was brewing, had she not fortunately for a moment retained her hold upon the window-frame. But Charity Crandall was not the woman to be easily diverted from any object upon which she had set her mind, and despite her forebodings of days of toothache in store for herself, she kept the little window open.

All that she could make out, however, was that Brian Hawkes and Buck Lawless were conspiring together against some person whose name she did not hear mentioned, but of whose identity she had no doubt. The dreadful word "murder" reached her ear once or twice.

"Come, pull yourself together, Lawless," she heard Hawkes say, in a sharp, imperious tone. "You'll have to keep off the drink awhile if you're going to carry out this job properly."

"I shall be all right, guv'ner. It isn't every day a fellow has th' chance of such a skin-tightener as this at another man's expense. Your good health, guv'ner;" and with drunken politeness he staggered to his feet, holding his glass aloft as he hiccoughed out his toast.

But this final effort to sacrifice to the social graces was too much for him. He stumbled, and clutching at the table to save his clumsy carcass, knocked it over with a crash.

One man's misfortune is ever another's opportunity, and no one could deny that the noise was quite sufficiently alarming to justify Mrs. Crandall—who was itching for an excuse to break up the unhallowed conference—in entering the room, which she promptly did, without waiting for the formality of being called, or even of knocking, as she anticipated the possibility of thus catching the enemy unawares.

With an air of great anxiety and alarm, she made her way into the room.

"Heavens above us, sir! what's the matter?" she cried, addressing herself to her guest.

"Nothing, Mrs. Crandall, nothing," answered Hawkes, coolly replacing the table on its legs as he spoke.

"It's the first time I ever heard of nothing making such a noise in the world, though I know nobodies who have done it," responded the old woman dryly. "Do you call *that* nothing?" she continued, pointing, as she spoke, to where Buck Lawless leaned against the end of the lounge, staring at her with drunken impudence.

"Nothing—to you, at any rate," retorted Brian Hawkes brusquely, with the intention of making the widow understand that in the present instance two were company and three none, and that her presence would willingly be dispensed with.

"Indeed! and I differ with you there, Mr. Hawkes. If it isn't my business who comes into my house, to say nothing of playing the evil one's own diversions with my furniture, I'd like to know who's it is?"

"The police, may be, if they did their duty," answered Hawkes with a sneer; but before the words were well out of his mouth he saw that he had blundered.

"The police, is it? Do *you* talk to *me* about the police? I should like to know which of us three would face the police—or say the detective, Caleb Clickett—with the best heart, if it came to that;" and Mrs. Charity Crandall challenged the two men with a look.

The shot was made at a venture, but it went straight home. Buck Lawless lurched down into a seat, and growled out:

"It—it's all right, widow; who wants to talk about the police or that devil Clickett, either?"

But Brian Hawkes grew pale to the very lips, and it was with a shaking voice that he answered:

"You're too free with your tongue, Mrs. Crandall. Let us alone, and go about your business. This is *my* room while I pay for it, and I'll thank you to get out of it."

But Mrs. Crandall's patience was at last completely worn out. With indignation blazing in her eyes, she retorted:

"Do you think I'd keep you here for the few dimes I'd make out of you, after what's passed? Out you go, Mr. Brian Hawkes, this very night. Maybe Shady Buck Lawless can put you up at a pinch, as you don't seem over particular. I'll have no friend of his under my roof, and wouldn't if he paid me ten dollars a day for the accommo-

dation. Now then, settle up, and away with you!"

Brian Hawkes listened to the excited woman's words with a look of incredulous astonishment and consternation.

CHAPTER XVI

LAWLESS AND HAWKES RETIRE FROM THE FIELD—THE WIDOW SORELY PERPLEXED

For fully a minute the widow waited for some sign on the part of her unwelcome guest to indicate that he would obey her vigorously expressed order; but as he made no motion to leave, she at length impatiently exclaimed:

"Come! don't keep me standing here all night. Pay me what you owe me, and be gone!"

"Don't be a fool, woman," returned Hawkes angrily.

"You may just keep your 'fools' and your 'woman' till you get back to the city, or wherever you came from, Mr. Hawkes. They won't get stale by the way, for out you go within the next ten minutes, or I'll know the reason why."

Buck Lawless sat stupidly staring while the widow stormed. This little incident, unpleasant as it might be to Brian Hawkes, possessed no terror and very little interest for him; and it was only his companion's keen, sharp note of anger that roused him from his indifference.

"To-night? Do you mean it? Do you really want me to get out to-night?"

"Yes, sir," answered the widow, calmly but firmly, "I do. And why not? You've got no baggage; and if you had, I'd send it after you with the greatest of pleasure, you may be sure."

"But—"

"There's no use in wasting breath, sir. My mind is made up. A man is known by his friends, by the company he keeps, and no friend of Buck Lawless sleeps under my roof, even though he paid like a prince. Out you go, sir, this very night; and the sooner you start the better for you and for me."

"Oh! you go to the—"

"No, sir—no, sir; thank you kindly. I have no wish to set eyes on you again. *You* can go where you please, and I dare say you'll find yourself there all in good time; but for me—why, I'll just stop right where I am."

Hawkes was considerably taken back by this emphatic action on the part of Mrs. Crandall. With the ever-present suspicion which is the twin-brother of an evil conscience, he wondered what and how much this woman knew.

He had not, of course, the faintest idea that any part of his conversation with Buck Lawless had been overheard, but yet he could not in any reasonable way account for the widow's sudden

determination to get rid of him in such uncere-
monious fashion upon the mere ground of his
association with the brutal villain who made
him savagely angry by sitting in stupid silence,
blinking foolishly at first one and then the other.

Meanwhile Mrs. Crandall stood resolutely to
her guns, waiting, clearly enough, for Brian
Hawkes to take his departure.

After a few moments, as neither of the men
moved, she quietly said:

"Well, I'm about tired of waiting. Now,
Buck Lawless, just take yourself out of my
house, and darken its door again at your peril."

The miserable fellow seemed to be sober
enough still to be able to read Mrs. Crandall's
steadfast purpose in her voice, and to think
twice before setting her at defiance; and with a
sheepish look at his companion and a drunken
chuckle, as if he, too, would fain try and pass the
whole thing off as a joke, he slouched out of
the room and the house.

Brian Hawkes watched him in silent amaze-
ment; then, turning to Mrs. Crandall, he said
roughly:

"Upon my soul, madam, you carry things with
a high hand for a third-rate hotel-keeper."

"Carry things with a high hand, eh? Well, I can
do that if need be, and I can carry my head high,
too—hotel or no hotel. I can look the world in

the face with no greater crime on my soul than taking a fair price for an honest meal, Mr. Hawkes, and it would be well if all of us could do the same."

"What do you mean, you—"

"Now, Mr. Hawkes, I've put up with more from you already than a decent, self-respecting woman should, and I'd just advise you to keep a civil tongue in your head. Remember, if you please, you're not talking to your friend Buck Lawless," and there was more than a tinge of contempt in her tones as she uttered the words.

"*My friend* Buck Lawless! Why, madam, you're mad. I can't talk to a man about an engine and a steam yacht but you must put him down as my friend. You're an idiot, no more nor less."

"Well, I've heard it said that we're all mad on some point or other," answered Mrs. Crandall dryly; "but I'm not such an idiot as to believe all I'm told even by a *gentleman* like you. I should have thought that if you wanted information about engines and steam yachts you might have sought it in decent quarters—Marshall Manning, for instance, or Eugene Embler."

As she mentioned Embler's name Mrs. Crandall looked keenly at her companion, and he changed color as he stammered out:

"Eugene Embler? You seem to think of no one about here but Eugene Embler. What is he to me? I shall seek my information where I choose."

"Of course you will, sir," returned the widow dryly, for she was quite cool again now that she felt herself master of the situation; "and I'm sure it must be a real pleasure to a *gentleman* to have the opportunity of making the acquaintance of Detective Clickett's black sheep, Shady Buck."

"Devil take Shady Buck!"

"I've no objection, sir; not that I would wish even him any more harm than his evil ways are sure to bring him before he's done. He's a bad lot, that same Buck Lawless, and if he doesn't end his days in prison, or at the end of a rope, he'll be lucky."

"What do you mean, woman?" retorted Hawkes hastily, his fear of what she might know or even guess suddenly springing into new life again at her words.

"Why, I declare! anyone would think that Buck Lawless was your brother born from the interest you take in him, sir. Well, everyone to his taste, but I should wait until every other man on the face of the earth was gone before I made a friend of Buck Lawless." Then she added quietly: "But time's getting on, sir, and you'll not want to *walk* to the center of the city to night, I take it?"

With an ugly scowl, Brian Hawkes answered in angry tones:

"Do you mean it then? Do you want me to go?"

"You may be sure I do—and I me *you shall* go, too. There's not room, I tell you, in this house for me and a friend of Buck Lawless. I shouldn't sleep at night for fear I should wake up in the morning and find myself with my throat cut."

"Take what I owe you," answered Hawkes with a sullen scowl, throwing a ten-dollar gold-piece on the table and rising from his seat without more ado. "How soon is there another horse-car to the city?"

"They run every twelve minutes till half-past ten. You can catch the last one easy enough, and with time to spare."

"Give me my change and let me go," returned the man roughly.

"With all the pleasure in life, Mr. Hawkes," answered the widow, and bustling out of the room, she soon returned with a bank-note and some silver, which Hawkes thrust into his pocket without a word.

Before leaving, however, he determined to make one more effort to find out what, if anything, this woman knew or suspected; so while he drew on his overcoat he remarked, with an air of assumed carelessness:

"I dare say I shall be this way again soon, to visit the engine and boiler works and see the steam yacht—"

"And your friend Buck Lawless?" interrupted Mrs. Crandall.

A quick frown made the dark eyebrows of the man meet in one heavy line across his angry face as he answered in low, hoarse tones:

"I see you're no better than a fool, like the rest of your sex. You seem inclined to make a confounded lot out of my having had a little talk with that man."

"No, sir; *I* shall not make as much out of it as *he* will, I dare say," she retorted.

"I don't understand what you mean," returned Hawkes, in a tone in which fear and anger were plainly mingled.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Crandall; "you needn't fret yourself so, sir. I only meant that of course Shady Buck would be proud of his new friend, and might get to talking and making much of it when he's full. And who could blame him? for it's not many, even of his old mates, who would care to be seen with a drunken villain like him, who, as you must know, is even mean enough to rob the dead; much less would they be caught hob-nobbing with him over a glass of liquor, like loving brothers."

Hawkes made an attempt to laugh, but the ghastly merriment died on his pale lips.

He felt sure now that Mrs. Crandall suspected something, even if she actually knew nothing.

He was sure that she meant more than she said, and that the innocent interpretation which she had given to her own words was really only assumed to blind him and put him off the scent.

Yet the wary Hawkes did not see his way clear at the moment to question her any further, without running the risk of betraying himself; and so, without more ado, he thought he would make the best of things and treat the whole affair as lightly as he could.

So he took up his hat, and with outstretched hand advanced to the widow, saying, with an air of "let by-gones be by-gones: "

"Well, I must not stand chattering here, or I shall miss the car. Good-bye."

But, somehow or other, Mrs. Charity Crandall did not seem to see his hand, and with her own tucked carefully under her white apron, she answered him curtly:

"Good-night, sir."

And Brian Hawkes, scowling and sullen, went away along the road leading across the bridge, where he expected to find a car waiting. But he had not gone more than a dozen paces when he heard the widow's voice calling after him.

He stopped and turned, wondering what was to come next.

"Will you leave me your address, sir?" she called out.

"No; you won't want it," he answered back.

"But your friend Buck Lawless may," was the retort.

"Oh, confound Buck Lawless!" came the savage answer; and then he strode off into the darkness, joined a few paces further on by Lawless himself, who accompanied his newly found friend to the horse-car terminus, and then left him and staggered home, chuckling and telling himself that he had done a good night's work.

Hawkes reached the Elliott House with a mind ill at ease, full of black and bitter thoughts, and dreaming of dire things to come ere long, which should satisfy at once his passion and his hate.

And good Mrs. Crandall? Well, that worthy woman slept but little that night. She had heard something of the devilish plot on hand, but not enough—something which set every fiber in her body tingling with indignation and apprehension; and yet not enough, she feared, to justify her in taking it upon herself to put the law in motion against the pair of scoundrels. Never was woman more sorely perplexed.

All night long the cruel word "murder" rang in her ears, and in her brief snatches of fitful sleep she was haunted by the hideous presence of Buck Lawless, the hissing tones of Brian Hawkes, and the dream-enacted horror of awful crimes of treachery and violence.

The one thing clear to her was that some vile and brutal act of vengeance, though she could not tell for what, was being planned, and she did not wait long to decide against whom the plot was thickening.

Yet, should she speak? Should she send for Detective Caleb Clickett, and tell him all she knew? or should she for the moment wait and watch, get clearer evidence and further proof, before launching so terrible a charge against even men whom she hated and despised as she did Buck Lawless and Brian Hawkes?

When daylight came her resolve was taken, and all she waited for was the opportunity, which must come soon or must be made.

CHAPTER XVII

EUGENE AND MILDRED—MARSHALL MANNING'S RETURN

A week had elapsed since Brian Hawkes had received his abrupt dismissal at the hands of Mrs. Charity Crandall, and Eugene Embler had spoken out of the fullness of his heart to the girl whom he had so long loved in secret. It had been a week of unalloyed happiness for Mildred Manning and her lover—a week so full of all the fresh and absorbing emotions of first love that there was room in the young girl's heart for no thought of other things. All the world was bathed in rosy light for her—her heaven was brightest of the bright, and she forgot for the time that there were such things in nature as black clouds fraught with evil.

For Eugene Embler, too, the week had been well-nigh perfect in its joy and peace. In his heart the flood of happiness swept on, blotting out all suspicion of coming or existing evil, and filling him with good-will toward all the world.

He saw Mildred daily, and had soon decided upon the course which prudence and affection told him was the right one to pursue.

"We will wait a little, dear, before we speak to your father," he said to her the day after the declaration of his love. I have waited so long that it seems a little hard to have to wait even ever so short a time, now that happiness is so near to me, but it is best."

"*We* know of our love, Eugene, and that is enough," answered Mildred fondly.

"God bless you, dear. It *is* happiness indeed. Ah! Mildred, you can never know what it was to me to see you day by day; to think that may be someone else seeing you, too, would love you, as it seemed to me all men must, and I should have to stand by helpless and dumb, with no right to move or speak to save myself from despair—to give myself one chance of happiness."

"Eugene, I understand," whispered Mildred, slipping her hand in his as she spoke; "but don't let us talk of that, dear. Let the past and all its troubles go. Nothing can separate us now."

At her fond and fearless words a sudden spasm seemed to shake Eugene Embler, and he clasped her hand more closely as he answered:

"No, dear, no. Nothing can part us now, Mildred—nothing, now."

For a few moments silence fell between them like a veil, hiding their thoughts from one another, for not even to the fondest, truest hearts can perfect unity be known.

Then Eugene Embler asked:

"When does your father return, Mildred?"

"I don't know, Eugene. He could not find the tools he must have, he tells me in a letter which came this evening, and he has written for further leave of absence, to enable him to have some made under his own eye—you know what father is, Eugene—but of course he may not get it."

"Oh, yes, he will," answered Embler promptly. "The owners of the works are the best of men—nothing mean or illiberal about them; and Mr. Stevenson, the president, is one who would take an honest interest in such a genius as Marshall Manning, and help him in every way he could—not cramp and crush him, or, worse still, as many would, set himself to pick his brains for his own profit. He will get leave of absence fast enough, Mildred, never fear."

"Then it may be some days before he comes home again," said Mildred.

"Perhaps it is as well, dear," returned Embler firmly. "Nothing can part us now; it will give me time to put things beyond all doubt."

"Eugene—Eugene—*there is no doubt?* There can be no doubt, dear!" cried Mildred, a breathless terror suddenly falling upon her, and almost stealing away her voice.

"I think not, dear. God help us if there were! But it will give me time to get proofs. The

news—my release, Mildred, from a fate that was far worse than death—was sent to me in a form that should leave no room for doubt. "Her sister wrote," he continued, avoiding mention of the name of his dead wife, "and pasted upon the inner page of the letter that set me free was a newspaper paragraph telling the story of her death—the pitiful ending of a profitless life. See, darling, I want to spare you as much of the sad story of my past as I can; but may be you should read this for yourself," and he handed her the letter with the broad black edge, with the newspaper clipping fastened to it.

With dim eyes, full of sympathy for the man at her side who had suffered so sorely and so long, and not wholly free from pity for the dead woman, Mildred Manning read the not very neat missive which told the tale of the death of her lover's wife.

How strange it all seemed! But she could bear now even the thought that the man she loved had once been the husband of another woman, for her heart told her that this new love was as far asunder from the old as heaven is from earth.

So she read on, and in a few moments had learned all the little sheet of paper had to tell.

The letter had no formal opening, and ran thus;

"242 West Twenty-sixth street, }
NEW YORK, Friday evening. }

"She is dead. I won't pretend to think *you* will die over it, for men don't care for women as women care for men, and you can't have cared for her, or you would have found her out before now. And she didn't care for you after a while, or she would have claimed her rights, for we always knew where to find you—yes, her rights, for, after all, she was your wife, Eugene Embler, and you must help me to bury her. She was my sister, and a better one than many a better woman might have been. She did not trouble you for money during her life, but you can send fifty dollars for the expense of her funeral, as money has not been plentiful with us lately.

'DORA INGHAM.

"TO MR. EUGENE EMBLER, 47 Hamilton street,
New Haven.

"P. S.—Send your answer to the post-office station at Seventh avenue and West Twenty-eighth street. I will call for it there. D. I."

On the inner page was pasted a printed clipping which ran as follows:

"FATAL ACCIDENT ON EIGHTH AVENUE.—As a horse and heavy wagon belonging to Messrs. Johnson, Smith & Co., of 305 Canal street, was being driven up Eighth avenue yesterday afternoon, the horse suddenly took fright and ran away, coming

into collision with a private carriage, and knocking down a lady at the corner of Twenty-third street. The lady was rendered insensible, and was carried into a neighboring drug-store. Upon recovering consciousness she was removed to No. 242 West Twenty-sixth street, where she died before medical assistance could be procured. The deceased was known at this house by the name of Ida Ingham, but it is understood that she was a married woman, living apart from her husband. The cause of death was shock to the system and concussion of the brain."

Without a word Mildred Manning handed back the fateful letter to Eugene Embler, who folded it with care and thrust it away in his pocket. Then, after a brief interval of silence, he said quietly: "I have sent the money, and I have asked for a copy of the certificate of death, the doctor's address, and the place where she is buried. Perhaps I ought to have gone to New York and seen the last of her, but what a mockery it would have been! How could I have assumed the part of a mourner when all the time I was thanking God in my heart that He had rescued me from being fettered to her for life? Better surely that I should not soil my soul by acting such a heartless lie."

"It is true, Eugene; you were better away. You could have done no good to her, poor creat-

ure! and it must always be right and better, to avoid hypocrisy, even at the risk of being misjudged."

"You can pity her?" said Embler softly.

"Indeed I can—if only for not knowing what she lost in losing your love, dear."

Eugene stooped and kissed her, and with a word or two of trust and love, left her, happy and at peace.

A few days later, Elsie and Oscar Sherman, to both of whom the lover's story had been told, were chaffing each other in their usual good-natured fashion, without the faintest intention of quarreling, when Mildred entered the room with an open letter in her hand.

"Did I tell you this morning that father would be home to-night, Elsie? You must help me to have everything bright and cozy for him. Come, Oscar, when you've done with your nonsense, perhaps you'll let her assist me for a few minutes."

"Let me help, too, Mildred," returned the young man, eagerly.

"*You* help—a great, awkward—there, I've no patience with you," interrupted Elsie Manning, laughing merrily.

"You are very hard on me. Nothing I can say or do is right," complained Oscar, with an odd expression of despair elongating his jolly face.

"I think it is because you are too sensitive about a joke that's made at your expense," retorted Elsie.

"No one else is so sharp with me," continued the poor fellow, with a rueful countenance.

"Then you shouldn't come near me, if your'e so tender. Barefooted folk shouldn't tread upon thorns," returned the girl, with a mischievous smile.

"Thorns, Elsie, thorns? No, roses—the sweetest, loveliest roses."

"Now, once for all, Oscar," retorted the girl, with a pleasant laugh and a pretty blush, "you see how busy Mildred is; come and help us, and do hold your foolish tongue. I don't want to hear a word of your nonsense about roses. Roses, indeed!" she rattled on, as she bustled helpfully about the room. "I suppose you'll be writing verses about us next, and rhyming your roses with posies or noses, or something about as sensible."

"Ah! if I only *could* write poetry, Elsie! if I only could say—" and he suddenly stopped short in confusion, as he found himself tenderly feeling of his own nose, and saw the faces of the two girls, as they broke into a merry peal of laughter.

"Really, Oscar, you mean to flatter us, I dare say, but I wish you would let *our* noses alone,"

said Mildred, with a humorous twinkle in her bright eyes.

"I see no harm in a little innocent joke," he said, in reply.

"Joke! Do you call that a joke?" retorted Elsie, with assumed indignation. "If I were you, Oscar, I wouldn't try to be funny. Want of wit's worse than want of wealth, for one may be remedied even by a fool who has good luck, but the other, never."

Before Oscar Sherman could think of the pat reply which he felt that he ought to have made, and which was sure to flit through his brain some hours later, in the silent watches of the night, the cottage door opened, and the sturdy form of Marshall Manning appeared.

"Father!" cried both the girls in a breath; and then there ensued an affectionate rivalry between them as to who should be the more active in removing his coat and making him comfortable in the big, low-seated easy-chair in front of the cheerful, crackling fire.

The old man kissed both his daughters, and nodded in a friendly way to Oscar Sherman, but it was evident to them all that his mind was not with them.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE INVENTOR BEWILDERED—A MOMENT'S REJOICING—
THE SHADOW OF NIGHT AND DARK DESPAIR

Marshall Manning took his place in the depths of the chair, and as he answered in monosyllables his daughters' inquiries as to his health, his visit to New York and its results, he was apparently absorbed in one of his day-dreams. The girls knew his moods so well that they did not attempt to interrupt the current of his thoughts, but waited patiently until he chose to speak.

This was quite soon, and his cheerful tone quickly put them all at their ease.

"A fine old bear I must be," he said, with hearty kindliness, after a few moments spent in his dreamy reverie; "not a word for any of you. Well, dears, you know it is not because I am not glad to get back to the little home. But there is so much to think of, so much to do—so little time," he repeated, with a stifled sigh, as he gazed into the glowing depths of the fire.

"Did you get what you wanted, father?" asked Mildred, ignoring the latter part of his speech.

"Yes, dear, after teaching the man his business.

Lord! what fools and idlers some men are! This fellow—God bless my soul!—he knew no more the sort of things I wanted than a Comanche Indian, and seemed to think, like so many of them, that anything would do. I had to draw patterns of every identical thing as closely as I possibly could, and then, to give the devil his due, the man certainly did contrive to turn out something like what I wanted. By the way, Mildred, talking of that, I suppose I have not been wanted at the works?"

"No, father; not to my knowledge," returned his daughter.

"And you and Elsie, between you, would have been tolerably sure to have heard of anything of the kind, I reckon," said Marshall Manning, with a shrewd smile.

Elsie smiled and said nothing, but gave Oscar Sherman such a coquettish glance that it was only by a marvel of self-control and the continual silent repetition of "Fifteen dollars a week; what! marry on fifteen dollars a week?" that he restrained himself from incontinently taking her in his arms, and then and there asking the old man's blessing upon them both.

"Ah! but it's a real pleasure to be employed at our works," the superintendent resumed, with an earnest ring in his voice; "no degradation in *that* labor. The engines and machinery we

turn out are such grand affairs that everyone who has part or lot in making them—aye, from Mr. Stevenson and the other officers down to the lowest laborer—might well be proud to remember, wherever they may be in years to come, that they have been connected with the establishment, no matter in how great or humble a degree it may have been."

"But about yourself, father?" resumed Mildred.

"About *me*? Oh! I'm right enough, dear. I have my tools now, and can forge ahead during the winter, and soon after the New Year, with God's help and good fortune, my machine may see the light."

"I am so glad, father—after all these years," said Mildred; adding a moment later, when the memory of so many similar promises flitted through her ardent young brain, like chill, gray ghosts: "You are sure, father—you are sure that this time you have *really* found out the secret?"

"Yes, my daughter; and if the Lord will, I shall yet live to see you ride in your carriage, and *you* will live to see your father, old Marshall Manning, the crank, the dreamer, looked up to as one of the great inventors of the day—may be one of the benefactors of the age," he added, the enthusiast's fire lighting up his dreamy eyes.

"But, dear, you must not overwork yourself," said Mildred gently.

She was not altogether unaccustomed to her father's rhapsodies, and, truth to tell, while she loved him and was proud of him, she did not altogether share his confidence in the realization of his rosy dreams.

"There is no fear of that, my girl," he answered cheerily. "I have plenty of tools now, and can go straight ahead—straight ahead to victory—thanks to the generosity of Mr. Brian Hawkes."

The utterance of the name fell in the little circle like a bombshell.

"Mr. Brian Hawkes?" echoed Mildred faintly, and in tones of horror, while Elsie and Oscar Sherman looked at each other in silent bewilderment.

"Yes, dear; he was most kind: took an interest in the model at once—and I had done him the injustice of thinking him an empty-headed fool. Then, best of all, Mildred, when he found I wanted money for new tools, he offered me five hundred dollars. That's what I call a friend and a gentleman in real earnest."

"And you took his money, father?" asked the girl breathlessly.

"Of course—why not, dear; 'twas but a loan, and one day he shall be paid back, with interest such as he never dreamed of."

"Father! father!" stammered Mildred, and stopped, unable to control herself sufficiently to put her feelings into words.

The old man, whose mind had already slipped back to his beloved work, was bending over the table, opening a parcel containing the precious tools with the utmost care, for did they not mean to him the very crown and triumph of long years of thought and labor? But something in the tone of his daughter's voice pierced through the crust of self-absorption, and he turned toward her with an anxious look in his eyes.

"Why, Mildred, dear, what is the matter? Aren't you glad that I found this gentleman, to act like a friend to me, just when I needed one so badly?"

"Mr. Hawkes is no friend, no gentleman, father," answered Mildred, in hesitating accents.

"Why, what do *you* know about him, child?" returned Marshall Manning, marveling at her look, and a little afraid, in a vague, unpleasant sort of way.

"More than I can tell you now, father," answered Mildred; "he is no friend to you; he is not a good man, father. Oh! how *could* you take money from *him*?" she cried passionately.

Marshall Manning looked from one to the other of the group in sheer amazement. He could not understand the meaning of this strange outburst

on the part of Mildred, who was usually so calm, so gentle, so loath to speak or even listen to aught but good of living soul.

In answer to the inquiry in his eye, Oscar Sherman said quietly:

"Mildred is right, Mr. Manning. Brian Hawkes is no fit friend of decent folks."

"Tell me—tell me just what you mean, Sherman. I don't understand all this. Has anything happened while I have been away, thinking of nothing but myself and my own plans—Heaven forgive me!"

"No, no, father dear, nothing particular has happened. Don't reproach yourself. There is no need. You did not know. I will tell you—by and by," murmured Mildred rapidly. Then she added: "Oh, why—why, dear, could you not have asked Eugene Embler?"

"Eugene Embler?" echoed her father, looking keenly at her as he spoke.

"Yes, father; you could have trusted *him*," said Mildred.

"I know it, Mildred, and I do trust him. He is a fine fellow, and I know well would have helped me if I had asked him. But, dear, there were reasons—" and the old man hesitated and looked a little confused; then added, but still with rather an embarrassed air: "Why should I have asked him, Mildred? He has to earn his

money as we all do, and I had no claim on him."

A pretty blush mantled the cheek of the daughter as she bent over and kissed her father, whispering:

"Yes, dear, you had more than you thought. He has something to tell you, father."

The old man looked at Mildred shrewdly. Her whole face was lighted up with the brightness which comes of a joyous heart, and for the moment even the dreams of the inventor were swallowed up in a rush of parental love.

"My dear, dear Mildred! Has he spoken to you, then?"

"Yes, and he is coming to see you to-night. Oh, you are not angry, father?"

"Angry, dear? It is the best of news. Indeed, there is no man living to whose care I would rather trust my little girl. But it is hard to think of losing you, though it is but what I might have looked for, sooner or later. I could not have hoped to keep you all my life, dear. Yet, how I shall miss you—how I shall miss you!"

"I'm glad to think that, father," answered the girl, tenderly smoothing his gray hair with her soft hand, as she spoke, adding softly: "We must not be far apart ever."

While this confidential little chat was in progress, Oscar and Mildred's sister had been busying themselves at the other end of the room with

domestic details, relieved by a little quiet love-making, and in another minute a tempting meal smoked on the table, and all drew up to partake of it with hearts brimful of love and thankfulness.

"To-night, did you say, Mildred?" asked her father presently, when he had satisfied the first cravings of an appetite sharpened by a long fast and by the savory odor which curled up from the uncovered dishes.

"Yes, father, he said he would come to-night. He is so eager, dear, to tell you how happy we are," answered Mildred.

"Well, my daughter, I have always liked him—almost like a son. He is a splendid fellow, and you will be happy with him. I always thought him a little old for his years, but a man had better be steady than weak and spiritless, especially when he is going to take a wife and make a home, eh, my dear?"

Mildred paled a little; then she answered quietly:

"He will have much to tell you, father, and then—then you will understand him better."

"Nay, my dear, don't think I was complaining of him. Whatever he may have to tell me, I may *understand* him better, as you say, but I can never *like* him better than I do now, and I wish him all the happiness he deserves. Hark! that sounds like his step on the front walk!"

A quick blush added to Mildred's beauty as she rose to meet her lover, with a world of pride and happiness beaming in her face, and with words of loving greeting on her lips.

Then the door opened, and she staggered back, all the light and life gone out of her face, and pain and terror in her eyes.

It was his footstep. Eugene Embler had come; but there was nothing of the happy triumph of the lover in his looks.

With white, haggard face, and eyes from which an agony as of death itself looked out, he halted on the threshold, gazing at the little group as if in dumb despair.

Sherman was the first to recover from the shock of his appearance, and putting his hand on Embler's arm, he asked in low, excited tones:

"What is it, Eugene? What's wrong with you?" Then with an effort to make the best of what he feared was some coming tragedy, he added in a lighter tone: "Have you seen a ghost, man, or what?"

Eugene Embler gazed at him a moment, as if he did not understand. Then, with a groan of agony and a gesture of despair, he cried out:

"Worse, worse! Oh, my God! ten thousand times worse!" and fell like a dead man at the feet of Mildred Manning.

CHAPTER XIX

THE DEAD ALIVE—DETECTIVE CLICKETT LISTENS

The day which was destined to end so tragically for Eugene Embler had been a singularly happy one for him from dawn to dusk. All nature had seemed to rejoice with him in his joy, as he worked away at his appointed task—the finishing of the wonderful engine for the great millionaire's beautiful yacht. He had sung at his work, and directed those under him in cheery tones which fell gratefully upon the ear, and so the sunshine that warmed his heart was felt by all.

Throughout the golden day, while the sun shot quivering shafts through the windows of the great room in which they worked, and the gleaming waters of the river and harbor were dotted over with busy steamboats and other craft, Eugene labored on like a Titan, insomuch that those with him, though they had good reason to know that he never was a shirk, were greatly astonished. But now that his mind was free from the degrading secret and the haunting fear of open shame which had weighed him down for

years, he could feel again, in all the fullness of his manly nature, the pride of taking part in the construction of an engine that should send a noble craft cleaving its way through the water at an unheard-of rate of speed, and thus aid in no small degree in bringing all the nations of the earth nearer together, for distance is no longer measured by miles and leagues, but by time.

And then, too, Eugene Embler had something of the poet—something of the idealist—in his nature, and this wonderful engine was something more to him than a mere combination of iron and steel in many forms: it was the visible embodiment of the brain and nerve and muscle of many of his fellow-workmen, whom he respected. More still: it was the outward form and expression of who shall say what noble dreams, what arduous thought, what strenuous hours of concentrated calculation, what strain of mind and sinew, what quick-witted intelligence, what heroic courage, what worthy use of God-given powers of eye and hand and intellect, and of what high hopes and anxious tension, what unwearying patience, what weighty responsibility, and, at last, supreme success—something to be proud of forever!

Never had he felt more keenly that the glory of a man is in his strength; never had mind and body been in more perfect harmony, or life seemed fuller of beauty and of worth.

At noon he had enjoyed a moment's interview with Mildred, and had returned to his work refreshed and stimulated by new happiness, and when at last the five o'clock whistle blew, as the gray autumnal mist stole up the river, and in the distance the green hills and level meadows melted into one soft, hazy picture, he strode away toward Forbes avenue, and so across the bridge to the horse-car terminus, his heart still full of thankfulness for the joy and peace which had come unlooked-for into his life.

Arriving at the terminus, he took but little heed of the stir and bustle on the steamboat landing. The fussy and excited questions of bewildered travelers, the cool, dry answers of the officials, the score of glimpses of those comedies and tragedies of daily life of which a waiting-station or landing is so frequently the scene, were all passed by unnoticed.

He hastened to the already crowded car, and making room for himself on the forward platform, rode to Hamilton street, where he alighted, and hurrying to his boarding-house, at once ascended to his own apartment, for he had much to do.

During the week he had received a second letter from New York, which put the last lingering doubts to flight, and left him free to ask Mildred Manning to be his wife in the face of God and man.

Again, without a formal greeting, the strange communication from the sister of his dead wife reached him. But he was in no mood to quarrel about forms or quibble about phrases, and it was with a sense of irrepressible gratitude that he read the following letter:

"242 West Twenty-sixth street, }
NEW YORK, Thursday. }

"The money came all right, and it was useful enough. Now I will give you your money's worth, like an honest woman. Ida was buried yesterday, just outside the city. I was the only mourner. I wonder if you gave her a thought? Well, it doesn't matter to her or anybody else now. It is all over, and I can see you gloating over this letter, as if it had brought the best of news. The doctor who saw her gave a certificate of death from concussion of the brain. He called it by some Latin name which I forget, and I gave the paper to the undertaker. The doctor's name is Thompson, and he lives close by, just across Seventh avenue. Ida never spoke after they brought her home. The fifty dollars just paid for the funeral, as I wasn't going to let my sister be buried like a dog.

DORA INGHAM.

"TO EUGENE EMBLER."

For a little while, after reading this strange letter, Eugene Embler felt a manly pity for the unhappy wretch whose unwomanly life had termi-

nated in such a terrible manner, but a night's sleep refreshed him. His conscience was at rest, and the keen morning air infused new life into his vigorous frame, as he strode off to catch a passing car; and by the time he reached the works he had been forced to the conclusion that to profess any other feeling than one of intense relief would be but hypocritical and unworthy.

Had she been different—had she retained any honest claim upon him—he would have done his duty by her, and tried, even at the price of life-long misery, to save her from herself. But she would not have it so.

All that a woman could do to make herself the bane and curse of the man to whom she had sworn to be a true wife this woman had done, and it was as natural for him to thank God that He had freed him from her as it would have been had he been raised up from a bed of what seemed like death.

In truth his soul had been well-nigh killed within him by the load of shame and misery he so long had borne in uncomplaining silence. What wonder if he should now rejoice in its new and glorious sense of life!

So, as the days passed, this sense of freedom grew until at last he had sung at his work, and now that he had learned from Mildred that her father would return that night he had

crowned her happiness by promising that he too would return, and tell him of their love.

Upon leaving Hamilton street, however, Eugene Embler did not make his way at once to the little cottage on Townsend avenue. He had a little business to do in the center of the city first, where he had remarked, a few evenings before, a certain modest gold ring set with pure pearls, as softly radiant as the beauty of the girl he loved, and which he destined for her finger—a sign, in its unbroken circle, of the eternity of the bond between them.

So, turning toward Chapel street, he took a car to the corner of Church, alighting near the entrance to the green—a spot as busy as ever with men and women and children homeward-bound or pleasure-seeking, as the case might be, and turning aside a moment to slip two letters into the post-office—one addressed to Miss Dora Ingham, post-office station Seventh avenue and Twenty-eighth street, New York, and the other to Dr. Thompson, Twenty-sixth street, near Seventh avenue, New York—he hastened back to Chapel street, with its never-ceasing rattle of vehicles, its smoothly gliding horse-cars, and its throng of men and women; and turning eastward, he hurried along toward Orange, until, when about half-way, he paused before a window where were laid out in prodigal profusion whole regi-

ments of pretty productions of the jeweler's dainty craft.

A few moments' careful scrutiny of the window, and he saw that the particular ring upon which he had set his heart was still unsold, and in a few minutes more he had made it his own, and was striding back toward Church street, eager to catch the next car, and so the sooner meet his darling, to claim her from her father, to slip upon her finger this sweet and sacred token of their mutual love.

On he went, thinking little of those around him, and much of the girl whom he was going to meet; and absorbed in his pleasant reverie, he did not notice that he had passed the corner, and was directly in front of the arch which spans Gregson street.

Here, as usual, there were knots of people gathered, and all at once a voice fell on his ear, compelling his attention.

A woman was having some trivial altercation with a policeman. It was easy to tell by her shrill voice that she was the worse for liquor, but the officer seemed to Eugene to be unmercifully severe; so, ever a champion of the weak, he hesitated an instant to see if he could be of any use.

At this moment the light of a neighboring street-

lamp fell upon his face, and also upon another—that of the woman in the crowd.

With a low cry he shrank back; but even had he wished to avoid recognition, it was too late, for the woman had caught sight of him, and with a hideous chuckle of triumph, said to the policeman:

"Let me go, d' you hear? That gentleman's a friend of mine—a particular friend. Let me go!" and before he could stop her she had pushed her way through the crowd to where Eugene Embler stood, just within the shadow of the arch.

With a white, haggard face, so different from that of a moment ago that it seemed as if a mask had suddenly been drawn over it, Eugene Embler stood there, waiting for his doom.

With a malignant sneer upon her lips, the woman advanced close to him, and looked up into his face.

Involuntarily he recoiled from her. His whole soul shrank in horror and loathing from this foul thing which had come back from the dead to blast his life.

The movement, slight as it was, was not lost upon his companion, and inspired her with new malignancy—the fury of a woman scorned—and it seemed, too, as if it sobered her.

With a low, harsh laugh, pitiless as the devil-

ish triumph of an evil spirit over a lost soul, she put her hand upon his arm.

"You don't seem glad to see me, Eugene," she said in constrained, metallic tones.

The little crowd which had gathered when the shrill voice of the woman and the rough bass of the policeman were in altercation had now dispersed, and when Eugene Embler recovered his self-possession to some extent, his first thought was to avoid as far as possible the open shame of a scene in the public street.

"Come away—for God's sake, come away!" he muttered hoarsely, turning and passing through the archway into Gregson street as he spoke.

The woman followed him closely, their arms touching as they walked.

When they had gone a dozen paces or so, followed by a coarse laugh or two from some of the people who were a little annoyed at being balked of a free show, he turned toward her and said, in a low, fierce voice which shook with rage and horror:

"What devil's trick is this, woman?"

And, unseen by either of them, another, who had stealthily followed them, bent eagerly forward to catch the answer.

It was Caleb Clickett, the detective.

CHAPTER XX

THE DETECTIVE IS DEEPLY INTERESTED IN WHAT HE
OVERHEARS

Detective Clickett had seen this woman before that day—had seen her under peculiar circumstances, which were destined to have a strange bearing on the fate of more than one of the characters in this story—and he had concluded that it was his business to find out all he possibly could about her.

And now, when he saw her accost this honest-looking, gentlemanly young fellow so familiarly—even imperiously—he determined to know what it all meant, and so, drawing still nearer, and at length slipping into a passage-way just behind the ill-assorted pair, he bent forward and listened.

What devil's trick is this, woman?" repeated Eugene sternly.

With a light, careless laugh, through which, however, there was perceptible to her companion's highly strung senses a note of cruel triumph, the heartless creature answered:

"You always were a fool, Eugene. I wondered

whether you would know me again after all these years."

"I was little likely to forget you," he retorted bitterly.

"Then I haven't changed much? I have worn well?" she resumed, with a ghastly air of coquetry.

"No, you have not changed, evidently. You are the same—as full of lies and tricks and deviltries as ever."

"You don't flatter me, Eugene."

"For God's sake! woman, don't speak in that way. Tell me what is the meaning of this? I thought you were dead and buried."

"A little joke; Eugene, a little joke. It was so long since we had met that I thought a little surprise would be amusing to both of us."

"What a fiend you are! Great God! that creatures like you should be permitted to live, polluting the very air you breathe, when good women suffer and die."

The woman laughed again, her strong white teeth and gleaming eyes giving her something of a tigerish look in the dim light.

As she made no answer in words, Embler repeated bitterly:

"I thought you were dead—"

"And rejoiced—now did you not?" interrupted his wife.

"What else should I do?" returned her companion, almost inaudibly.

"Well, you need not have told me—even me—the truth quite so brutally. But it matters little. I have had my joke, Eugene, and if *you* can't laugh at it *I* can.

"But it was in the newspapers. What did it mean? I know you of old, and that you are devil enough for anything; but how could even *you* have got a false report like that inserted in the paper?"

"How simple you are, Eugene! Still the same guileless innocent abroad. Suppose among my few friends I should number a printer or sub-editor, and suppose I may still be able to twist a man round my finger when I choose, would it be so wonderful, then, if he agreed to do me a little favor, just for a joke?"

"But what object had you in it?" asked Embler. "Surely even *you* might have stopped short of such a devilish piece of work!" he exclaimed fiercely, the great wave of misery which this untimely resurrection had brought upon him sweeping away all possible pity for the wretched woman. "I should have thought that no living soul in the shape of man or woman would have conceived or lent himself to so shameless a plot."

"Ah! Eugene, you evidently don't know what women are, yet—nor men either. I suppose you

thought that as I had not troubled you for so long, I should never trouble you again. Well, you were mistaken. You may have forgotten me, but I have not lost sight of you—never for a moment."

"Why—why have you dogged me like this? Why could you not at least let me live my wretched life alone?" asked Embler hoarsely, struggling as best he could against the terrible anger which welled up in his soul against this double traitress.

"A whim—a mere woman's whim. You know what queer creatures we are," returned his wife lightly, adding with a laugh: "Angels, aren't we? when men want us; devils when they don't."

There was a moment's silence. Both were thinking rapidly, and the detective, who was intensely interested, cautiously and noiselessly changed his position a little.

"Then what do you mean to do?" at length asked Embler dully, desperate in his misery as he thought of all that this woman's reappearance meant for him.

With a pang of unutterable pain he felt his hand touch the little box in his pocket which held what he had fondly believed to be the sign and seal of the happiness of all his future years.

"Do? I think it is for me to ask that question of you. Don't think that because I have

not chosen to ask you to keep me for a few years, I have no right to do so now. Suppose, too," she added, with a subtle affectation of passion in her voice which stung him like the venomous tongue of a snake, and made him recoil again from her in an overmastering impulse of loathing and disgust, "suppose I were to say that the old weakness—the old folly, if you like—had mastered me again—that I had remembered that I was your wife—that I loved you!"

There was a slight but a decided movement in the passage-way, as if the listener had started with surprise; but the woman heard it not, and the man, in his agony, paid no attention.

The bold eyes and brazen manners of the creature before him forced themselves upon his senses in horrid contrast to the sweet and gentle face, the truthful eyes, the modest mien of Mildred Manning; like some flaunting, scarlet poppy, gaudy and poisonous, rearing its head by the side of a pure white lily.

With a stifled groan, he turned to the woman by his side, and said in strained, harsh tones:

"Let us cease this folly. You have spoiled my life so far. Do you mean to blast it to the end?"

"Why should you think so?"

"How can I think otherwise, after what you have already done?"

"You take my little joke too seriously. How Dora and I laughed as we wrote that touching story of my death!"

"You she-devil!" muttered Embler, beside himself with misery and rage, as he felt the fiendish mockery of the smile with which the woman told the story of her plot, gloating alike over its ingenuity and its success.

"You used not to call me anything so rude, Eugene," retorted his companion, renewing, to his disgust, the affectation of amorousness which had already proved so repulsive to him. "There was a time when you could not say sweet things enough to me. You loved me once, Eugene."

"Never! I never loved you. I may have thought so in my foolish passion, but I never *loved* you. That holy word should never pass the polluted lips of women such as you."

"Cruel—cruel; but I will not reproach you. If you cannot give me your love again, you can give me your name and a home, and, strange as it may seem, I am tired of my present life, and have a fancy for respectability. Odd, isn't it? but, like many other strange things, it is true."

"My name? A home? Great heavens! it is impossible," stammered Eugene Embler, all the shame and torture of a life with this degraded creature rushing in upon his brain with fearful realism.

"Why not? You seem to forget that I have the right—the *legal* right—to both."

"Perhaps; I cannot tell. All I know is that the same home can never hold both you and me while there is forgetfulness and peace to be found at the pistol mouth or in the waters of the harbor."

"Do you mean that, Eugene?" asked the woman, in a voice that all at once grew grave.

"By the God that sees us both, I mean it!" answered Embler, all the misery in his soul trembling in his voice.

"Then what will you do?"

"I cannot say."

"But you must—you shall."

"I will do what is right," said the man dully, as if fighting with himself against a swarming crowd of temptations.

"What will you do?"

"You must give me time to decide."

"Why? I *am* your wife; you don't deny that?"

"I cannot—"

"Or you would?"

"I would; and I would give ten years of my life to be able to do so with truth."

"Well, Eugene, it's no use speculating upon the impossible. Here I am, alive and well, and *your wife*. You thought me dead, and perhaps—

for you men are never to be relied on—you may already have chosen my successor—”

“Silence, woman!” cried Embler fiercely. “Whatever real or fancied claim you may have on me, whatever you may think of doing to further blast my life, at least you shall deal only with me and my past—that fatal past to which I owe the curse of all my manhood.”

“Then you *have*—” began the woman, but Eugene Embler interrupted her at once by saying, in hard, stern tones:

“I warn you once for all, whatever I may or may not do for you, never speak like that again. My past was yours; my future—God help me!—may be yours; but the present is my own—a sacred memory if it can never be aught else.”

The woman listened to him quietly, then, with an angry light gleaming in her bold and handsome eyes, she said:

“It is no use bandying words. If you cannot give me your love, you can give me some of your money. I am rather low down in the world just now, and open to make very easy terms.”

Embler felt that he must escape in some way from this haunting spirit of evil for the moment, or he would lose all control over himself.

“We cannot talk here,” he said. “I will meet you in Wooster Square to-morrow night at ten.

It will be quiet there, and we can talk over matters, and come to some arrangement."

To his surprise and relief, his proposal was at once agreed to. There was yet time for him to catch a car to Tomlinson Bridge, and so pay his promised visit to the Mannings.

"I agree. It is better that we should understand each other," she said quietly, adding: "Give me something to help me over to-morrow. The fifty dollars are all gone."

Without a word, he drew a five-dollar bill from his pocket, and was just going to place it in her hand when a thought struck him.

"How happened you to come up here just at this time?" he asked abruptly. "It was to see somebody else besides me, was it not?"

The woman started, and a look of consternation came into her face.

"What—what do you mean?" she gasped.

"You know very well what I mean," he retorted sternly. "Your scamp of a brother is here—the brother who, by his cunning forgery, robbed you, and who no doubt, if the truth were known, has committed many another villainy."

"Oh! Jasper is here, is he?" exclaimed the woman, in a tone which she did her best to make seem careless, but which was really one of great relief. "I didn't know what had taken the worthless wretch."

"It's either Jasper or his double," said Eugene. "He calls himself Brian Hawkes, and I haven't been quite certain about his identity, but now that I see you—"

"Oh, pshaw! I don't know anything about Jasper's movements. The last I heard of him he was in Chicago—had got into some serious trouble there, I believe—married another wife, or forged somebody's name, or something. But never mind *him*."

"Then you haven't come up here at his request?"

"No; why should I? I—I came to see you, and for no other reason whatever."

But she seemed nervous and ill at ease as she made the assertion.

"Well," said Eugene, looking hard at her, "take this. We shall soon know the truth, perhaps," and he put the bank-note in her hand.

The woman took it greedily, and muttered:

"To-morrow, to-morrow," and suddenly flitted away into the darkness.

And Eugene Embler made his way, he scarce knew how, to Townsend avenue, his brain reeling with its burden of ill news, yet strong in his sense of duty, and the determination not to meet Mildred with a lie.

The cottage reached, his strength enabled him to turn the knob and open the door; then will

and memory fled, a great darkness overwhelmed him, and he fell at Mildred's feet with his awful tidings—trembling but untold upon his lips.

CHAPTER XXI

JAKE'S LODGING-HOUSE—CLICKETT GATHERS FURTHER INFORMATION

Caleb Clickett wasted no time on Eugene Embler when the interview between that unhappy young man and his wife was over. After catching a glimpse of his face in the light from one of the rear windows in the great Insurance Building, and hearing the tones of his voice, he remembered that he had seen him more than once at the Quinnpiac Engine and Boiler Works; and so, satisfied that he could find him at any time in case he should want him, he let him go his way, and hastened after the woman.

He caught up with her near the corner of Church and George streets, and followed her to the vicinity of Meadow and Water streets, where he saw her disappear through the entrance to one of the cheap boarding and lodging houses of that locality.

"I thought so!" he muttered, in a quiet tone of satisfaction, and at once entered the bar-room connected with the establishment.

The proprietor was behind the bar, and alone.

The detective approached, and looking him squarely in the eye for a moment, said:

"Jake, you know me, I believe?"

"Thunder!" was the answer, delivered with something of a growl, "I should just say I did."

"Well, then, knowing me as you do, you know I will stand no nonsense."

"Everybody knows that, Mr. Clickett."

"Very good. Now, then, you've got a couple of my pet lambs upstairs, and I must hear what they have to say to each other."

"You must be mistaken, sir; they're all on the square in this house—not a crook in the lot. I've been mighty particular of late."

"Come, come, you're wasting time, and I've none to spare. In what room is the fellow you call Oily Brent?"

"Oh, him? But he's alone, and you said there were two."

"Yes, I know he's alone—excepting when he has a woman with him."

"Yes; but she's his wife, he says—came up from New York only to-day to see him."

"I know all about that, Jake; I was present at their most affectionate meeting—only you needn't tell them so. And now you may direct me so that I can find my way to the room next to the one they occupy, without running the risk of anyone's seeing me."

"All right, sir. Their room is on the third floor back, toward Commerce street. Go up the back stairs, and slip into the next room toward the front—the door's unlocked—and if you cautiously open the register in the partition wall, which is about a couple of feet from the floor, you can hear all, and see a good deal of what is going on in their apartment. But mind, Mr. Clickett, you're not to give me away."

"Never fear, Jake; you're all right;" and the detective quickly disappeared through a side door leading into a back hall.

A minute later he was on the third floor, and having satisfactorily located Oily Brent's room, he promptly entered the one adjoining, and closed and locked the door.

Having lighted a match and located the register in the wall, he slowly and noiselessly opened it, but only to find that the one directly opposite, which admitted heat to the adjoining room, was closed.

This, after some little trouble, he succeeded in opening a little way with the assistance of his pocket-knife. He was afraid to do more lest he should attract the attention of those he had come to watch.

And now, although he could not very well see, he could hear; and appropriating the two pillows from the bed to make him comfortable, he

stretched himself at his length on the floor in front of the register, and listened.

"But that shouldn't have kept you all this time," were the first words that reached his ear, in a man's voice. "What have you been up to for the past two hours and more, I'd like to know?"

"I really don't know that it's any of your business, Brent Brommer," a woman's voice replied, somewhat sharply.

"Ha! I thought so!" said the listener to himself. "I knew I couldn't be mistaken."

"None of my business, eh? We'll see about that," retorted the man. "You've been drinking, for one thing."

"Of course I have; and so do you—when you can get anything to drink."

"You just bet I do. And that's what grieves me, Ida, to think that you should get plenty of liquor, and spend an hour or so making way with it, when you knew that I was here all alone, without the means to buy even so much as a thimbleful to drown the care that is killing me."

"Oh! Brent, you're the same old humbug that you always were. But I can't help liking you, and so—here, take a pull at this; I bought it on purpose for you."

"Whisky!" exclaimed Brent, with an audible sniff at the bottle; and seizing it, nothing was heard for the next moment or so but the gurgling

of the spirituous stream as it found its way down his throat.

"Ah! that's good!" he at length paused to exclaim. "Where did you get it? Not from Jake, I bet."

"No; I got it from a druggist. Told him it was for sickness, and so I must have the best. You're very sick, ain't you, Brent?"

"Oh, you just bet I am. Here, let me take another pull."

"There, there, Brent! that's enough. Give me a chance, if you please."

"You? You've had enough already, my dear. But no matter; you were mighty good to bring it to me, and so you shall have a swallow. Now, then, what kept you?"

"I've seen him."

"What! Embler? The deuce you have!"

"Yes, and I'm to see him again at ten o'clock to-morrow night, when we are to come to some understanding, and he is to settle what my allowance is to be. Ha, ha!"

"Ida, you're a devil!"

"That's what he said."

"Which goes to show that he's not such a fool after all."

"But he told me something else, Brent—something that makes me a little uneasy."

"What's that?"

"Jasper's here."

"The deuce he is! What's the fellow up to? Oh, I know; there's a crack yacht being fitted out over on the Quinnipiac, and he's been hired by certain parties interested in other works to ruin her engine and machinery."

"What a villain he is!"

"Yes; he's a terror on wheels, and no mistake. But why should his being here make *you* uneasy?"

"Why, can't you see? He's utterly heartless—utterly selfish. You know how, by means of the forged will, he robbed Dora and me of every cent of our interest in father's estate. Well, if he knew that I—or rather we—were here, he might think we had followed him in order to bleed him, for he'd suppose we'd think he had plenty of money—"

"And he has plenty, too. Those who sent him to ruin the yacht's engine had to come down with a nice sum in advance as earnest money—that I happen to know."

"Well, he'd think that we'd got an inkling of that. Perhaps he's aware of the fact that you know it?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, then, what I'm afraid of is, that in order to frighten us off, he may give Eugene a hint of the truth. He's mean enough to do it—that you know."

"Mean enough? He's mean enough for anything. But confound him! if he plays any such game as that on us, I'll give him dead away. If he didn't but know it, Hackett, the Chicago detective, isn't done looking for him yet; and there's a widow out there that would give a pretty penny to get her hands on him for about five minutes."

"Yes; and I fancy his wife, who is now in Washington, would give something handsome for a page or two of his hidden history."

"You're right, Ida. But let the fellow drop for the present, and hand me that—there, confound it! I've hurt my finger again. I wonder if the blamed thing isn't ever going to get well."

"Let me look at it, Brent. It's the one you lost the nail from, isn't it?"

"Yes; I've heard that it takes six weeks for a new nail to grow, but it's almost five times six weeks since I lost that one, and you can see the condition the finger is still in."

"Goodness gracious! it must have hurt you awfully, Brent."

"Hurt? That's no name for it. I thought I should go wild with agony, or faint dead away."

"I can well believe it. And really, I don't think you'll ever have a decent nail on the finger again. I don't see how you managed to go ahead with the job after such an accident."

"It was just clear grit that carried me through."

By the way, Ida, you've taken good care of the stuff, I hope?"

"Of course—all that it wasn't safe to convert into cash."

"Good enough. I had to lay low after that affair, and I've had to be mighty cunning ever since I struck the city this time, all on account of that cursed finger-nail. The fact is, I believe Clickett found it. I thought once he'd got me cornered, and felt sure the game was up; but he seemed to put the affair into other hands, and then I just altered my face a little, borrowed a suit of clothes from a friend, and walked away as slick as you please."

"And then you went to Washington?"

"Yes; I couldn't know for certain, you understand, that I wasn't followed. It might be a shrewd game on Clickett's part to let me seem to slip through his fingers, thinking that I would lead them straight to the boodle; and so I kept away from you and hunted up dear brother Jasper. And I tell you what, Ida, I've made him come down handsomely more than once in the past six months, you bet."

"I'm glad of it. And you knew he was coming up here?"

"Yes, I knew it—not directly from him, you understand—and I didn't know just when he was coming; but I had certain information that the

little scheme with regard to the yacht was definitely settled."

"But why should you come? What object had you in running into such certain danger—into the very jaws of the lion, so to speak?"

Brent Brommer hesitated before answering. At length, when the woman repeated her question, he said:

"Well, if you must know, I came on a very delicate mission. Give me another pull at the bottle, and I'll tell you all about it."

The bottle was silently passed to him.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DETECTIVE HEARS ENOUGH—EUGENE AWAKES TO DESPAIR

"Thunder!" exclaimed Brommer, after a moment's inspection of the whisky-bottle, "it's empty! Not a drop left, and I can't talk with a dry throat."

"Ring the bell, then," said the woman.

"But, confound it, I haven't enough to pay for a pint of liquor—no, nor half a pint, either."

"Of course not; but I have."

"You, Ida?"

"To be sure. Didn't I tell you I'd seen Embler? Do you suppose, having him at hand, I'd let him off without bleeding him?"

"No, I'll swear you wouldn't. Ha, ha!" and he rang the bell.

Jake himself answered the call, and left the room with the bottle and Eugene's five-dollar bill in his hand.

A few moments later a boy brought back the bottle, filled with indifferent whisky, and the change.

After he had departed, and Brent had refreshed himself, he said, very deliberately:

"Well, Ida, you wonder what brought me up here just at this time, and I suppose you wonder what made me send for you?"

"No; I suppose I was sent for to bleed poor Eugene."

"Incidentally, of course; but that was not the main thing. I wanted your assistance in courting a young lady and securing her for my wife."

"Brent Brommer, what nonsense are you talking now?"

"Not nonsense, my dear, but the best possible sense. Just listen."

"I am all attention, sir."

"Well, then, there was a fellow named Norton—Herbert Norton—who fell in love with a very pretty girl named Ella Scofield, who six months ago lived, and at the present time still lives, well down Townsend avenue, near the Cove. Well, this poor chap, knowing that he wasn't in the best of health, after the girl promised to be his wife, made his will, leaving her everything; and as a rich uncle had just died and left him a big fortune, to say nothing of the fact that his father was very wealthy, that was a good deal, I can tell you."

"I should say so; go on."

"Well, the same night that I lost my fingernail, the girl told Norton that she had found out that she didn't love him, and hence couldn't

marry him, and he went away in such a terrible state of mind that he dropped dead on the road before he was much more than half-way to the city."

"Dropped dead!"

"Yes; and now see how queerly things turn out. He had his will in his pocket, and was going to give it to her that night; but she told him she couldn't marry him before he had a chance to say a word about it, and so he went away without even so much as showing it to her. Later, a crook named Buck Lawless came along, found the body on the road, and stripped it. We happened to take cover in the same den that night, and I assisted him in looking over some of the dead man's papers. I found the will among the others, and as he didn't seem to pay much attention to it, somehow it found its way into my pocket."

"I begin to see what you are driving at," said Ida, musingly.

"I suppose so. Well, in the exciting life I have led since then, I had almost forgotten the will; but some days ago, happening to take up a newspaper, I saw a notice of the death of Dr. Norton, the father of Herbert, and a statement that the great wealth his son would have inherited had he lived was going a-begging. Naturally, I then remembered the document in my posses-

sion, and after thinking the matter over a little, concluded that I might as well have the boodle as anybody else."

"I see. And you think you can win this girl and get the money?"

"With your help I think I can—that is, if Caleb Clickett don't get on our track."

"But what can I do?"

"In the first place, you must know, she is now engaged to another man. You can play with him—make a fool of him; then I'll step in, and she'll marry me out of pique—see?"

"Ah! there may be something in that. Who is the man she's engaged to?"

"He's a widower named Manning, a great engineer, machinist, and inventor. Miss Scofield only removed to the Cove about the time she was engaged to Norton, and then she got acquainted with Manning's two daughters. Of course she soon saw their father, and becoming interested in his invention, quickly began to look upon him as little short of a god, and now they are engaged."

"But isn't he much older than she?"

"Oh, yes; but she's just one of that dependent kind of women that wants a mature, positive man to cling to."

"Well, she'll get the mature part if she gets you—eh, Brent?"

"Well—yes, I'm afraid I am getting a little along in years; but you're no chicken yourself, Ida."

"You're mean to say that, Brent Brommer. Even Eugene admitted that I hadn't changed much—that I'd worn well."

"The deuce he did! He must have lost his eyesight then."

"What's that you say, you miserable wretch? Do you mean to insult me—*me*, your—"

"Hold up now. Don't get mad, my dear. Here, take a pull at this; 'tain't half bad, even if it has passed through Jake's hands."

Some moments of silence now followed, during which Detective Clickett noiselessly rose to his feet.

"I think I've heard enough," he mused. "Now, I'll have a serious little talk with Jake downstairs, then send some trustworthy fellow to watch these good people in my place, and after that prepare the grand climax. Lord, won't some folks be astonished though! Well, I reckon." Then, as he noiselessly left the room and hurried down the back stairs: "I wonder if Horace Hackett is still in New York? or if he's gone home to Chicago? I must find that out at the earliest possible moment."

Leaving the great detective to look after the various matters that demanded his careful atten-

tion let us for a few moments return to the Manning cottage.

When Eugene Embler recovered consciousness, after the fainting fit induced by nervous excitement and exhaustion, all his vital energies suddenly relaxing from their terrible tension like an unstrung bow, his first thought was for Mildred.

He looked round the little room, but his eyes only lighted upon Manning himself, who stood by him with eager anxiety in his face, and upon Oscar Sherman, who could not remain still for two minutes together in his friendly concern and painful sense of helplessness.

Presently the healthy color began once more to suffuse his cheeks, and he asked, in firm, quiet tones:

"Where is she?"

"In her own room, with her sister and Ella—Miss Scofield, you know. I—I thought it better—"

"Right—you were quite right," returned Eugene promptly. Then he gave one long, deep sigh—so intense in its evident pain that it was almost like a groan.

"What is it, Eugene? What has happened, old fellow?" asked Oscar softly, his usually hearty voice gentle and kind as a woman's.

The look of pain deepened, and a dull cloud

seemed to steal over Eugene Embler's eyes as he answered slowly:

"I can't tell you yet, Oscar—not now—not here—my God! not *here!*" he repeated, all the agony and despair which had fallen upon him showing itself in the tones of his voice.

"I'd better get him home, Mr. Manning. He will be better there," said Oscar, feeling sure that the one wish in his friend's heart was, for some reason, the exact nature of which he could only imagine, to avoid for the present meeting Mildred.

With the shrewd instinct of true friendship, the young man had hit upon Eugene's feelings with absolute precision.

Embler had rushed away from that terrible woman, fired with a noble resolution to tell the truth at any cost to his own peace; to avoid the acting of a lie even for a single hour; to face fate boldly, relentless as it was; and strong in his own untarnished honor, dare it to do its worst. A rash resolve; but nature, kinder even to her despairing children than they dream, stretched out her hand in pitying intervention, and, now that all the horror of the thing was borne in upon his reviving senses, his first thought was to save Mildred, as far as might be, from the misery which had overwhelmed his own soul, and at least to save her from a painful shock,

and to make the blow fall, if fall it must, as mercifully as might be, and upon one not wholly unprepared.

He remembered, now that the double bewilderment had somewhat passed, that he must still reckon upon the effect the ill news which he sooner or later must tell would have upon so true and trusting a girl as Mildred; that he must still and always remember that she must be the first consideration; that she was all, and he himself was nothing.

So it was with a quick and grateful glance at Oscar that he said eagerly:

"Yes, Sherman, I shall be better at home. Let us go. See, I am well enough now," and he rose to his feet, and was himself surprised to find no outward trace of his attack remaining, save a slight dizziness scarcely worth speaking of.

Marshall Manning, whose mind was divided between various vague surmises as to the cause of the strange and painful incident, was at least clear upon one point, namely, that until some explanation was forthcoming, Mildred and Eugene Embler were better apart, and he therefore raised no objection to Eugene's departure, secretly glad to escape the risk of an untimely meeting.

"I hope you'll be yourself again by morning, Eugene, my boy," he said kindly, putting his

hand upon the other's shoulder with a fatherly, affectionate gesture as he spoke.

Embler turned at the door, and grasping the inventor by the hand, answered huskily, and with emotion:

"As well as I shall ever be again. I have much to tell you, Mr. Manning; but not now—to-morrow, may be."

"Now, don't fret yourself, Eugene. Bad news runs on wheels, but for all that, I can trust you, my boy. Tell me in your own time—I can wait; and may be it won't prove as bad as you think."

"Thank you, sir; it's very good—"

"Now, just get home and rest," interrupted Mr. Manning kindly; "there's nothing in all the world for a sick mind or body like sleep. The clouds are always thickest and blackest in the night-sky, Eugene; but the dawn comes, my boy—the dawn comes in God's good time."

With a strong, silent pressure of the hand, in which the two men's honest hearts spoke to each other and were understood, they parted. As the door was closing, Eugene turned, and in the lamplight Marshall Manning saw his lips move. Then, controlling himself, and refraining, with the keenest sense of honor, from sending even one word of love to the girl whom now he might never make his wife, the strong, loyal, suffering man strode away in the night.

CHAPTER XXIII

MRS. CRANDALL'S WARNING—THE GOOD LADY SUR- PRISED

With friendship honest as a dog's, Oscar Sherman strode on by Eugene's side, speaking no word, treating his friend's silence with respect, knowing that when the fitting time came he would tell him frankly enough the meaning of this mysterious affair.

But, as events proved, the young man had to possess his soul in such patience as he could for a longer time than he had reckoned upon.

The homeward journey was made in absolute silence; then supper—a mere pretense on Eugene's part—was dispatched without any volunteered confidences; and when bed-time came and the night hours passed, and the two men found themselves setting out again together at early dawn to face a new day's work, Eugene's silence as to the events of the night before was still unbroken.

To the surprise of both the men, however, whom should they see standing close by the en-

trance to the works, when they reached their destination, but Mrs. Charity Crandall.

The familiar figure, shrouded in a great shawl, looked almost ghostly in the gray light of early morning, and it was with a presentiment of coming trouble that Embler and his companion stopped in answer to her signal.

"Why, Mrs. Crandall, you're astir early this morning," said Oscar, in as cheerful a tone as he could assume.

"May be; but for that matter, I'm thinking you and Eugene look as though you'd been up all night, to say nothing of the morning. Is there anything wrong with you? It isn't like either of you to look so out of sorts as you do now," said the lady, with a keen glance at both of them, taking in at once their troubled looks, Eugene's intense depression, and the strange something, almost like terror, in his eyes.

Then Embler found his voice, and asked question for question, shirking for the moment the explanation which he dreaded and shrank from, and yet knew must come.

"Have *you* any bad news to tell us?" he asked at length, in a hard, cold voice, curiously unlike his usual full and hearty tones; for something seemed to tell him that the cup of his bitterness was not yet full, and he nerved himself as best

he could to bear whatever trouble might be in store for him.

"Yes, Eugene, I must have a word with you at once," she answered, with an unusual air of gravity resting upon her kindly countenance.

"Won't it keep till noon or night, Mrs. Crandall?" asked Embler, for the whistle was summoning him to his work.

"It may be too late then," returned the lady, with so much emphasis that Eugene, whose nerves were already unstrung by his recent experiences, gave in without further parley, and decided to hear what she had to say.

"I'll just report myself, and ask for half an hour's leave, and be back with you," he said, quickly moving away with Oscar Sherman as he spoke.

Five minutes later they both returned, for Embler had asked Sherman to accompany him, wondering, and truth to tell, dreading, what new horror might be waiting for him, and finding some support in the presence of his devoted friend.

Rejoining the worthy woman, the two men accompanied her to the Quiet Home, where, as she said, they could talk more at their ease, without the risk of prying eyes or listening ears.

"Well, Mrs. Crandall, what is it you have to tell me? Nothing very bad, I hope?" said Embler as soon as they were within doors.

"Ah, but it is, Eugene; it's as bad as can be."

"Is it about Mildred?" asked Embler, breathless with emotion, and yet hesitating to speak her name.

"It has nothing to do with Mildred," answered her aunt, a little testily, Eugene thought.

"It has to do with *you*, and no one else."

"With *me!*" echoed Embler, honestly surprised, and unable to imagine what news of serious import Mrs. Crandall could have for him which did not touch Mildred.

"Just so. You remember I told you it wouldn't keep?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well, it is just a matter of life and death."

"Life and death!" echoed Embler, wondering more and more what she could mean, as it was plain to him that his own great misery—the Aaron's rod of sorrow which had swallowed up all minor doubts and troubles—was as yet unknown to her.

"Just so, no more nor less," answered the woman firmly, shaking her comely head ominously from side to side as she spoke.

"For God's sake! tell me what you mean, Mrs. Crandall," cried Eugene. "I've trouble enough already, so you needn't mind telling me your news, whatever it may be. A little more one

way or the other makes no difference when a man's heart is dead within him."

"Ah, I don't quite take your meaning, my poor boy," said the old lady kindly; "but I can see in your face that you have suffered terribly since I saw you last."

"Tell me—tell me what your bad news is," said Embler impatiently.

"Well, then, so I will. You remember that Brian Hawkes?"

"Of course—the man I pulled out of the Quinipiac, and whose right name is Jasper Ingham," answered Embler, wondering a little what *he* had to do with it.

"And you know Shady Buck?" pursued the old lady, who was acting out of no unkindness, but simply in obedience to her sex's sense of importance, in thus dallying over great but ill news.

"Ah! Buck Lawless, a drunken, worthless scoundrel," answered Embler curtly, while Oscar Sherman opened his eyes and ears wider than ever.

"Well, it lies between them—two born villains, if ever there were any," said Mrs. Crandall vigorously.

"What have they done?" asked Eugene, with fierce eagerness.

His thoughts had flown away in a moment from

himself and his own troubles. It did not occur to him that he himself was menaced any more than a lion would have scented danger in the proximity of two curs at his heels—except for the curs.

But it suddenly flashed upon him that perhaps some danger from this quarter threatened Mildred, and the thought maddened him when he reflected that his right to protect her—a right he had valued for a few brief days more than a monarch his scepter—had once more been snatched from him by the hand that had already robbed his life of all worth and happiness.

"It's not what they have done; it's what they're going to do," answered the woman. "Brian Hawkes, or Jasper Ingham, as you say his right name is, hates somebody, and means to take his revenge on him."

"Me, I suppose," said Eugene quietly.

"I can't say for sure. May be you know best. For my part, I can't think what grudge he or anyone else can have against you, Eugene; but, indeed, if it isn't you he meant, I can't fit the cap on any head of *my* acquaintance."

"I dare say it *was* me, Mrs. Crandall. There's no love lost between us. But what is it he is going to do?"

"Well, I'll tell you; but you must give me a minute to recover myself after thinking of them

as they sat together in my best private room—Buck Lawless in my best private room, stretching his legs as if he was the governor, or the mayor at least; just think of it!"

"Lawless and Hawkes?"

"Yes; as pretty a pair of rascals as ever cheated the gallows. Well, Eugene, I didn't like the looks of things when I came home and found them sitting there, whispering and talking just like two brothers, and so I discussed it with my conscience, and came to the conclusion that if I could overhear a bit and didn't do so, it would be a great deal worse than letting them go their own way unchecked. So I just took advantage of a little window that happened to open into the room, and though, after all my pains of mind and body, I could hear but a little here and there, I gathered enough to know that Brian Hawkes means serious mischief to one he hates with all the power of his black heart, and that Buck Lawless is to be the tool to carry it out for him. If it isn't you that's to be their victim, Eugene Embler, I can't think who it is, and would as lief have let the matter alone."

The young man looked very grave for a moment or two, then he said quietly:

"Mrs. Crandall, I thank you for the pains you have been to on my account."

"Then you think it was you that was meant?"

"There's no doubt of that. But it matters little now—best, perhaps, if they did their worst, Mrs. Crandall, and made an end of me."

"Then there's something else troubling you," said the woman, a motherly sympathy showing itself in her tone. "I thought there was something wrong when I first saw you this morning, and Oscar, too, with his face as long as my arm."

"I'll tell you the truth, Mrs. Crandall," said Eugene, after a moment's hesitation. "It must come out sooner or later, and I know that I can trust both you and Sherman not to speak till such time as I myself have spoken."

"You can do that," answered both together.

"Well, then, Mrs. Crandall, I love your niece, Mildred Manning."

"Ah, but that's no news, Eugene. I wasn't born a woman for nothing," answered the landlady with a kindly smile.

"I can believe it. I dare say you have seen what I thought of her, little as you have seen us together. But I couldn't speak to her of it; I dared not."

"Well, if that's all your trouble, Eugene, my boy, speak to her now. I'll warrant you a fair hearing," said Mrs. Crandall, thinking that she had all at once grasped the situation, and wondering a little that a man like Embler should trouble himself so about such a trifle, but put-

ting it down to the fact that even the wisest of men will make fools of themselves when women are in question.

"You don't understand—you don't know," he resumed. "I *have* spoken—"

"Oh, that's it, eh? And I suppose the silly thing just said 'No,' as they all do at first, just to make you the sweeter on them; not but what I would have thought Mildred would have had more sense."

"No; you wrong her. Mildred—God bless her!—answered me freely when I spoke to her; answered me out of her own true heart, and made me happier than I had ever been before."

"Then what's gone wrong with you? A lovers' quarrel?"

"My God! No! If it was only some such foolish trifle as that! I said that I could not speak to Mildred at first although I loved her. It was because *I had a wife already!*"

"*You! you!* Eugene Embler? Well, I declare! I'm thinking it's harder to understand you men than us women after all. Who would have thought that *you* of all men in the world would have had your secret, and such a secret as that!"

CHAPTER XXIV

A RAY OF HOPE—A MURDEROUS BLOW—THE TABLES
TURNED.

"Don't blame me, Mrs. Crandall," said Embler, with a heavy groan, "It was just because it was the curse and shame of my life that I kept it secret. It was hard and bitter enough for me, especially after I had seen Mildred, for then it seemed to eat away my very heart.

"I did not know whether this woman, my wife, was alive or dead," he continued, after a moment's pause. "I married her years ago, in a moment of mad folly, and then she left me, after revealing to me how vile, how false, how degraded women *can* be. Then I heard one night, about a week ago, that she was dead, and that I was free. God! how I thanked Thee for delivering my life from the burden!" he suddenly exclaimed in an ecstasy of passionate remembrance. Then he resumed:

"Free! You can guess what that meant for me. Free to tell Mildred Manning how I loved her, and to learn if, as I dared to hope, she loved me in return."

He paused a moment, almost overcome by his recollections. Then with an obvious effort he broke again the sympathetic silence and took up the thread of his story:

"I spoke. I had not intended doing so at once, as there were points I wished to settle, proofs to put beyond all doubt my right to woo and win her if I could. But something happened with that villain Hawkes, or rather Ingham, which forced my hand, and made me ask her to give me the right to protect her against all the world. She listened to my story—for I would not win her with a lie—and when she had learned all, I knew that by God's mercy I had won the love of a true and tender woman, to repay me for all the misery brought into my life by the incarnate devil in a woman's form with whom years before I had linked myself so fatally. The days went by like a happy dream, and last night I was going to tell her father of our love and ask his blessing. I had been to the center of the city to buy a ring—the sign and seal of our affection—when out of the crowd came a voice and then a face—it was my wife!—back from the dead!"

"Poor boy! God help you! 'Tis a heavy burden you have to bear," said the woman, the tears rolling slowly down her cheeks as she softly

placed her hand on his and pressed it with kindly sympathy.

Eugene Embler remained silent for a few moments, overcome with the mere memory of the shock which that terrible meeting had inflicted upon him. Then he said drearily, as if sheer despair had robbed him of all further interest in life:

"What *can* I do? What is the use of *trying* to do now?"

"You mustn't give up, Eugene, for one thing," answered Mrs. Crandall promptly. "All may yet be well. It's *her* turn now, but may be 'twill be yours to-morrow. At any rate, you must not throw your life away by just not taking care of it."

What is it worth now? What does anything matter now?" burst out Embler, in a passion of despairing misery, as the thought of all that he had hoped for, all that he had lost, rushed upon his brain like a torrent of seething, searing lava. "Oh! that the follies of a man's youth should dog him all through life, blasting every hope, killing his very soul within him, making him care for nothing here or hereafter!"

"My dear boy, I wouldn't talk so of the hereafter; that's in other hands than ours—the Lord be thanked," remonstrated the widow quietly.

"You are right—and I should not seem to

blame anyone but myself for all that has fallen on me. But you cannot wonder that I am in despair. Think of the paradise that seemed open to me, when all at once this fiend came back again from hades itself to bar the way!"

"But what will you do, Eugene?" persisted the woman, feeling sure that in his state of mind a plan which would involve some sort of action rather than a despairing submission to fate would be his only hope.

"I cannot tell. It seems to me, when I do try to look forward, all is black—black as Erebus! I feel as if I had been suddenly thrust back again from the light of heaven, back into a gloomy dungeon, and I seem to hear the clanging of the door at its mouth, shutting me out from light, and life, and hope, forever."

"You must not despair, Eugene. The law may help you. Can't you obtain a divorce?"

"I cannot tell—perhaps. I had scarcely thought of that, or of anything else but the one damning fact of her return," said Embler, with a gleam of returning hope in his honest eye.

"Ah, you see I can give you some advice yet, if you will but take it," said the widow kindly.

"You have given me just a grain of hope, and even that, to a man sunken as low as I was in despair, is like a grain of gold. I am going to meet her to-night—her, *my wife*—to meet her in

the darkest part of Wooster Square, where in some degree I may yet hide my shame from the sight of others."

"And why do you meet her?"

"To try and come to some terms by which at least, although all my hopes of present happiness are destroyed, I may yet be saved from the open shame and hourly misery of having to acknowledge this woman as my wife before the world."

"And you will protect yourself in the meantime against this Buck Lawless and his villainous plot, whatever it may be?"

"Pshaw! I've no fear of him, or a dozen like him—especially now that you have given me a spark of hope again. But I'll take such care of myself as one man can against two plotting villains."

"And about Mildred?"

Eugene sighed heavily:

"I shall tell her the truth, after I have seen my wife, to-night; and I shall do just what she bids me, for I know what she will say."

"What?"

"Do the right at any cost! But, oh! how hard that may be!" cried Eugene, in passionate tones.

Then, with a grasp of the hand all round, the woman went about her household duties, and the men to their daily labor; but all three hearts

were sad and heavy, and the minds of all three big with the anticipation of what new things, strange and terrible, or fraught with new hopes, the next few days, or even hours, might bring forth.

And hour after hour Eugene Embler toiled at his work, but with a heavy heart that made his labor double.

What Mrs. Crandall had told him worried him a little, and more than once he came across Buck Lawless, who, with several others, had been hired to help get the engine and machinery on board the yacht; and although the ruffian slouched by him with averted eyes, Eugene seemed to read mischief in the stealthy movements of the man, and felt a nameless horror of him creeping over him.

It seemed, too, as if he were beset on all sides—in peril of body and soul—and for a time even his manly spirit appeared to flinch and quail before these accumulated troubles.

"What had he done?" he asked himself, with bitter despair; "what had he done to merit all this misery? to bring down upon his head this avalanche of trouble? to spread about his feet this network of traps and snares?" Look whichever way he would, the outlook was gloomy enough. Shame, disgrace, treachery, may be death! What a crowd of horrors to hem one man

in! What a huddling mass of dense black clouds to overhang one weak mortal's life!

While he was in this gloomy state of mind, he was alone for a moment—or thought he was alone—in the dark interior of the yacht, waiting for the workmen to come with more of the machinery.

Presently he thought he heard a muffled footstep near him. He turned slightly. The movement saved his life; for at that instant a steel bar came down upon his head with a sickening thud, and he fell unconscious to the floor.

The assailant bent over the prostrate form, then another advanced from out of the blacker darkness on the other side. It was Jasper Ingham, disguised as a laborer.

"Quick now, Buck! quick!" he cried. "Out of the stern window with him, and then back and help me to finish my little job before the men return;" and so in their haste to get rid of the body, they did not stop to make sure that their victim was dead.

In another moment Buck Lawless was thrusting the unconscious form of Eugene Embler through the cabin window, which was just disappearing from view when he was seized with an iron grasp from behind.

In his terror he let go of his victim's leg, and

a loud splash followed, proclaiming that the body had struck the water.

"On deck there!" called out Buck's captor. "Rescue the man just thrown overboard, or secure the body!"

"All right, sir;" and two splashes, one quickly following the other, were heard.

"Now, then, Buck, you've got yourself into a pretty scrape, haven't you? It's murder this time, I'm afraid."

"I—I—'twasn't me that did it, Mr. Clickett; 'pon my soul it wasn't. It was that born devil, Hawkes. And—and he's raisin' thunder with the engine and machinery now."

"He is, eh? Your hands!"—click!—"that's all right. Come along now, and we'll see about it, my worthy Buck."

He conducted his prisoner to the engine-room, where they found Jasper Ingham, alias Brian Hawkes, alias Peyton Penny, safe in the hands of two detectives, one of whom was no less a person than Horace Hackett, of Chicago.

"Has he managed to do much damage, Horace?" asked Clickett.

"Well, considerable," was the answer; "but none, I take it, but what time and money will repair. And as I have found a memorandum in his pocket which puts it beyond question as to whose employ he was in, and as the parties have

plenty of means, they will have to foot the bill, and come down pretty stiff in the way of damages, too."

"Glad to hear it. Serve 'em right. And now let's get on deck and see if they've secured that body. Lord, I hope we weren't too late! If that poor fellow's past praying for, I shall never forgive myself."

They were soon on deck, and just in time to see Eugene taken into a boat by two policemen, and Marshall Manning and Oscar Sherman, who had jumped overboard and rescued him, helped in after him.

"What shall we do with him?" called out one of the officers, as the boat came alongside.

"Pass him up here, and we'll have him taken to Mrs. Crandall's Quiet Home," answered Clickett. Then turning to Hackett, he added: "And I guess we'd better adjourn there too. That's where I told the others to come, and it's about as good a place for the climax as we could desire."

"All right," nodded Hackett; "I'm agreeable. Come along, my worthy penman. No more escapes, if you please."

"No, no; not there—not there!" gasped Ingham, with a look of terror. "That woman is a she-devil; she'll tear me to pieces."

"I hardly think so," was the dry answer;

"that is, if others can get a chance at you first."

"What do you mean?" demanded the prisoner quickly.

"Oh, no matter; you'll know soon enough."

"See here," cried Ingham, with trembling lips; "I demand your protection. The law is responsible for my safety."

"The law, I think, will be able to take care of itself, whatever may happen to you; and now shut up, if you please, and move on

The prisoner moved without another word.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CLIMAX

It was quite a party that entered Mrs. Crandall's largest front room a few moments later—Marshall Manning, Oscar Sherman, the three detectives, and the two prisoners being of the number.

Eugene Embler was carried right through the hall to a back bedroom, where a physician, who had been quickly summoned by someone, found that the wound on his head was not a dangerous one, he having turned just at the right moment, so that the blow on the skull had been a sliding one, and the left shoulder had sustained the most injury.

His wounds dressed, and his wet clothes changed for dry ones, he was given a glass of stimulants, and told to lie down on the bed and get some rest; and then Mrs. Crandall and the doctor left him.

Meanwhile there was considerable going on in the great front room. At the threshold Clickett had been stopped by an innocent-looking youth, who assured him that the parties he had been in-

structed to watch were now inside; that, an hour or so before, the woman had made desperate love to a somewhat elderly gentleman whom she had intercepted on the road, and that now the pair were trying to bamboozle a pretty young lady in some way.

As the detective's party entered, all cast their eyes about the room, and in one corner saw a group of three: Brent Brommer, Ida Ingham, and Ella Scofield.

"Ida!" exclaimed Jasper Ingham, in astonishment and alarm; "you here?"

"Yes; and why not?" retorted his sister, with a look which showed that if it was war, she was ready.

"Yes, Mr. Jasper Ingham," said Clickett, pleasantly; "an agreeable surprise for you to meet your beloved sister in this way—and your brother-in-law, Mr. Brent Brommer, too!"

"What's that? My brother-in-law, eh? You seem to be well up in my family history."

"Oh, bless you! yes; I have it all down fine. Let's see;" and opening a door leading into an adjoining room, he beckoned two women forward. "Ah, yes; here are two ladies of your acquaintance, who I have no doubt you will be charmed to meet again."

"Oh, Jasper, my husband!" exclaimed the first, hurrying forward.

"Oh, Peyton Penny, you heartless villain!" cried the other, rushing upon him. "I'll scratch your eyes out!" and she went at him, tooth and nail.

"There! there! calm yourself, Mrs. Rockwell," exclaimed Hackett, forcing her off, while Clickett turned his attention to the trio in the corner.

"Now, then, Mr. Oily Brommer, if you are quite through romancing to that young lady, I'll thank you to put out your hands, while I adorn your wrists with these elegantly finished bracelets."

"Sir! what do you mean by insulting a gentleman in this manner?"

"Gentleman, eh? About as much a gentleman as your wife here is a lady."

"What! his wife?" exclaimed Ella Scofield. "Both he and she have been trying to make me believe that Mr. Manning was in love with her, and was going to marry her."

"The shameless wretches!" cried Marshall Manning indignantly. "I never spoke to the woman in my life till an hour or so ago, when she made the most barefaced proposal to me, and then I rebuked her as she deserved."

"They are a bad lot, I assure you," said Clickett. "The man is a burglar. See, that finger wants a nail. He lost it while breaking into the silk works in the city. I have it in my pocket.

I tracked him by it, and it will send him up for a good ten years. His wife here is even worse than he. Two or three years after she married him she married one whom you all know and respect—Eugene Embler—and has made his life miserable ever since."

"What's that? What's that you say, Mr. Clickett? Isn't she my wife at all? Have I never been married?" exclaimed Eugene, bursting in among them.

"Never to this woman, that's certain," answered the detective; "for I have a certificate of her marriage with Brenton Brommer here in my pocket, and the ceremony was performed nearly eleven years ago."

"Oh, thank God! thank God!"

"Thank God! thank God!" was breathed out like an echo by his side, and he turned quickly to clasp Mildred Manning in his arms.

"How affecting!" exclaimed Ida, with a coarse laugh.

"Yes," said another voice; "but I think, Ida, on the whole it would have been better if you had remained dead after we'd killed you so handsomely. Things don't look very bright for you just now, that's certain."

"Dora! what are you doing here?"

"Hackett, the Chicago detective, found me, and

being charmed with my society, insisted on my accompanying him to this beautiful city."

"Well, Ida," said Brommer suddenly, "the game's up, sure enough, and the prospect is pretty black for you and me and your precious brother over there."

"You and my precious brother can let them drag you off to prison if you like; but as for me, they shall never turn a key on me—never! never!" retorted Ida emphatically.

"What's that, Mrs. Brommer?" demanded Clickett sharply. "You are arrested on four charges—bigamy, receiving stolen goods, extorting money under false pretenses, and conspiracy. Hold out your hands!"

Ida had been fumbling in her dress, and now her right hand was closed. She suddenly clapped it to her mouth, and then held forth her hands with a derisive laugh.

"What have you been doing?" demanded the detective sternly, as he fastened the handcuffs about her wrists and then closed his right hand about her throat. "Spit it out, whatever it is, or—"

"Too late—ha, ha! too late! I've swallowed it, and—and—"

She slipped from his grasp and fell heavily to the floor—dead!

Six months later there was a triple wedding at the little cottage near the Cove. The contracting parties were Marshall Manning and Ella Scofield, Eugene Embler and Mildred Manning, and Oscar Sherman and Elsie Manning.

The wedding was quite a grand affair, and the little house was filled to overflowing with invited guests, among whom were Caleb Clickett and Horace Hackett, the latter, by good fortune, happening to be in the city at the time.

These two shrewd and courageous men, having got into a corner by themselves, began to compare notes.

"A pleasant ending to a rather romantic affair," said Hackett, glancing toward the happy couples at the other end of the room.

"Yes," assented his friend; "nothing could be better. Manning's invention turned out to be a perfect marvel. He has already received several hundred thousand on it, and will receive as much more. He has bought three-fifths of the stock of the Quinnipiac Engine and Boiler Works, given a fifth to each of his sons-in-law, who are now officers and directors, and he himself holds the most responsible position. Then, too, his wife came into a big fortune by Herbert Norton's will; so they are all very rich."

"That's as it should be. And Mrs. Crandall, I see she is well?"

"Yes, and as independent as ever. She says she will never leave the Quiet Home, but that it shall be what it has always been since she first opened it, and that to the last hour of her life."

"Good again, for it's the best place in New England to stop at. And now about our shady friends?"

"Well, Jasper Ingham got ten years for his share in the attempt on Embler's life and for destroying property. After he's served his time, you can have him for forgery and bigamy. Ida, with whom it would have gone pretty hard, escaped, as you know, by taking her own life. Dora, by coming up here voluntarily, and turning state's evidence, escaped scot-free. Buck Lawless, for assault with intent to kill, got ten years; and Brent Brommer, for the burglary at the silk works, for having Herbert Norton's will in his possession, and for conspiracy to extort money from Embler, got fifteen years, and I still have his finger-nail."

"Well, under the circumstances, it's worth holding on to."

"I think so; and now tell me, what of Mrs. Rachel Rockwell?"

"You will smile, but she no longer weeps for her precious penman, for she has found consolation in the arms of the Rev. Samuel Pyetie, of the Hallelujah Mission."

"I am glad to hear it, for her money will help the parson in his work, and he can make her happy. How's Gamsby?"

"Happy and satisfied. He has been promoted."

"Good; and you?"

"I have done well this year. I have saved some money and won some fame."

"I guess we are about on a par there; for I, too, have put away a little money, and I am starting a private museum, in which I am getting together quite a number of curious things, among which you will find Brent Brommer's finger-nail."

"Ah!" exclaimed Hackett, suddenly; "the bridal parties are off. Quick! or we shall not have a chance to say good-bye."

"No, no; we will not say good-bye—but God bless and prosper them always!"

THE END

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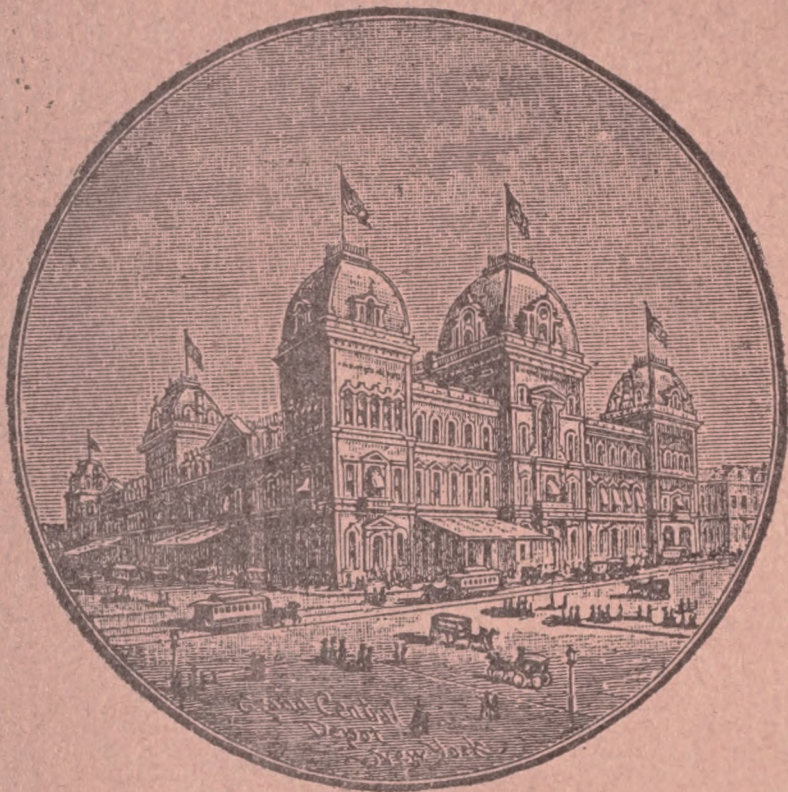
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